

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Tuesday, July 23

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, sweet potatoes, vegetable capri blend, applesauce, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Legion Regions at Clark

Wednesday, July 24

Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, pineapple/strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

Groton Golf Association Fundraiser, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Olive Grove

Legion Regions at Clark

Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m.

1440

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'We Failed'

US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle testified yesterday before the House Oversight Committee regarding the July 13 assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump at a campaign rally. Director since September 2022, Cheatle admitted the incident was the agency's worst operational failure in decades and took full responsibility while declining to answer several questions.

Cheatle faced queries about how the shooter accessed the rooftop with a clear shot at Trump, acknowledging the agency has denied Trump additional security over the past two years. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D, IL-8) noted video footage showed the agency was aware of the threat about 20 minutes before the shooting, and Cheatle admitted uncertainty about when the shooter placed the rifle on the roof.

Investigators have not determined a motive but note the shooter visited the site twice and flew a drone over the area on the day of the shooting. Cheatle said she will not resign despite calls for her to step down from a bipartisan group of lawmakers.

Harris Draws Support

Vice President Kamala Harris kicked off her campaign yesterday and began securing support from key Democrats, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, in her bid to clinch the Democratic presidential nomination. At least 2,500 delegates—of almost 4,700 total—plan to back Harris as the nominee at next month's Democratic National Convention in Chicago, according to an AP poll. The endorsements are enough for Harris to win the nomination.

The latest news comes after President Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race amid concerns over his age and viability as a candidate following his recent debate with former President Donald Trump. Harris' campaign has raised over \$81M since Sunday, breaking the record for the largest total sum raised over a 24-hour period from either party during this year's election. The figure is also believed to be the largest single-day total in US history. Of those who contributed, over 888,000 are grassroots donors—60% of whom contributed for the first time in the 2024 cycle.

Harris' possible picks for vice president are also beginning to emerge.

Dark Oxygen Mystery

Oxygen is being released at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, a new study revealed yesterday. The discovery has baffled scientists, challenging the long-held belief that only living things can produce oxygen through photosynthesis.

In 2013, researchers were studying the seafloor between Hawaii and Mexico, 2.5 miles below the surface. Upon sequestering a seafloor sample, researchers discovered oxygen concentrations were increasing without access to sunlight. The findings—repeated in later expeditions—have yet to be fully explained. A leading hypothesis posits rocks containing valuable metals like nickel and cobalt are splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen through seawater electrolysis. Elevated voltage in the samples (approaching that of an AA battery) supports the theory, though researchers have not identified a hydrogen byproduct.

The discovery challenges the theory that life originated through ancient microbes conducting photosynthesis. It also raises concerns deep-sea mining could disturb ecosystems relying on these rocks for oxygen.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

LeBron James tapped to be Team USA's male flag bearer at Paris Olympics opening ceremony Friday (1:30 pm ET, NBC); the female flag bearer is due to be announced today.

The 2024 Toronto International Film Festival (Sept. 5-15) full lineup revealed, will include 25 world premieres.

Abdul "Duke" Fakir, Rock & Roll Hall of Famer and last surviving member of the original Four Tops, dies at age 88.

Esta TerBlanche, South African actress and "All My Children" star, dies at age 51.

Science & Technology

Researchers use astronomical imaging technique to detect deepfakes, which include human faces; approach analyzes the reflection of light from a person's eyes.

Brain imaging approach detects the presence of conscious and intentional thoughts in otherwise comatose patients; may be used to diagnose locked-in syndrome, where patients are unable to physically communicate.

El Niño-like weather pattern discovered in the South Pacific; study suggests small regional phenomenon affects annual climate variations across the entire Southern Hemisphere.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.1%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq +1.6%); S&P 500 notches best single-day increase since June 5.

Tesla delays rollout of humanoid robots, will begin using internally next year and aims to produce them for external use in 2026; latest update comes roughly two years after Tesla debuted a prototype of its humanoid robot Optimus in 2022.

Boeing to sell up to 50 planes to Korean Air, including 20 777Xs; the 777X model is Boeing's largest commercial aircraft and has yet to be certified for flying.

Delta Air Lines cancels over 700 flights for fourth day after CrowdStrike outage.

Politics & World Affairs

At least 70 people killed in Gaza after the Israeli military struck areas in and around the southern city of Khan Younis after ordering residents to evacuate.

Israeli military confirms deaths of two more hostages, says 44 of the 116 remaining hostages in Hamas' captivity are believed to be dead.

Russia sentences Russian-American journalist Alsu Kurmasheva to more than six years in prison for allegedly spreading false information about the Russian army.

Ukraine reaches preliminary deal to restructure \$20B of international debt, enabling the country to save \$11B over the next three years.

At least six killed and six others wounded after shooter opens fire at nursing home in Croatian town, with one of the victims being the shooter's mother; shooter is in custody.

Soccer building, sewer system improvements discussed at city council meeting

A new building at the soccer field is on hold.

The Groton City Council canceled an order for a new 14 foot by 40 foot building for the fields on the west side of town. Instead, repairs to the current building are in the works, and discussion will continue about what the Groton Soccer Association and Groton Area School District will need through the next few years to continue to grow the program.

During the July 16 council meeting, members of the soccer association expressed concerns about the size of the proposed building.

"We don't need a building that big, and I don't know where it would go," said Whitney Sombke, soccer association vice president. "I think we should maybe have a better discussion about this. ...The big thing, when we came to the city in May, we said we need that building fixed.

"...There are still nails sticking out," she added. "We've had the discussion, 'do we want to invest in that (old building)? Do you want to get a new building?' But the top priority is that needs to get fixed in less than two weeks."

Soccer association President Becah Fliehs continued, "we talked about it in May, and safety, especially with our younger kids, is our biggest concern. ...That's why we started the discussion in May. We'd love to have a commitment from you guys that it's going to be done by camp."

Councilman Kevin Nehls said he would reach out to a carpenter and work to get the safety issues solved.

"We'll get something lined up," he said. "We said we'll get it taken care of. We'll get it taken care of."

Councilman Brian Bahr asked what price-point the soccer association was hoping for with a new building, to which Fliehs said she didn't want to make a hasty decision.

"It's hard to make a decision that's right for the school and the soccer association about something that's going to be there for 20 years," she said.

Bahr agreed that it is more important to fit the needs of the soccer association and school district. He asked the soccer board to come up with a list of what they want and what is needed at the fields.

Other concerns about mosquitoes on the field were discussed, and the council approved having Skeeter Defeater spray the soccer fields as well as the city swimming pool area to knock down the pests.

Millions needed to improve wastewater systems

An initial price tag for a variety of projects the city could consider to improve the sewer system totals nearly \$10 million, according to projections presented to the City Council on July 16.

April Buller and Ken Heir with IMEG brought an update to the council on a wastewater study, which includes several projects and alternatives.

The first alternative, which is recommended to increase the sewer system capacity and reduce instances of compliance issues, is to replace the Aspen Lift Station and add a new force water main, Buller said. The Aspen station is the lift station located at the end of the line, just before it goes out to the wastewater ponds. It is the one all the water goes through, she said, and replacing the lift station and adding a new force main would increase the capacity of the system.

"If you do increase population in town, you just need that capacity," she said.

That alternative, which has a price tag of about \$3.186 million, needs to be done, Buller told the board. The other alternatives are needed, but aren't as critical of a concern.

The other alternatives include adding an aeration system and/or a new wastewater pond; rehabilitating the Hanlon Lift Station collection system; replacing the sanitary sewer system by the mobile home park; replace the Abeln Lift Station; and replacing manholes in town.

Initial costs total \$9.797 million for all of the options presented to the council. If the city were to only receive a state Department of Natural Resources loan and no grant coverage for the project, the city would need to increase the monthly rate by an average of \$67.25 per household.

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“They’re pushing that all communities have to be at \$65 or \$70 (for the average monthly rate) before the state will come in with a grant or loan,” Buller said.

It hasn’t been common for the state to provide a loan with no grant funding in this type of situation, Heir said. It is also not going to be a quick process, as there are only two contractors in the area that can do these types of projects, and they have a lot of work.

Buller said she plans to bring a draft of the study to the council in September, and the city would have to prepare a grant and loan application by October to be on the state’s water plan for the next year.

- IMEG is working on an airport plan, with an emphasis on making sure the city’s airport is within compliance of any requirements the FAA has.
- The council approved allowing the garden club to remove juniper bushes near the Groton City Park sign on Main Street.
- The council approved allowing the public to possess and consume alcohol at Summer Sip & Shop, scheduled for 5 to 8 p.m. July 25 on Main Street.

- Elizabeth Varin

Brand New Program at

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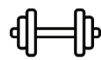
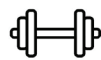
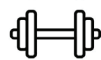
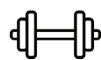
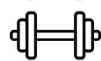
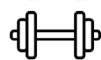
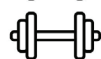
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Minnehaha County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal ATV crash
Where: 253 Street and 487th Avenue, one mile east of Garretson, SD
When: 7:04 p.m., Sunday, July 21, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2022 Polaris RZR ATV
Occupant 1: 16-year-old female, fatal injuries
Seatbelt Use: No
Occupant 2: 30-year-old male, life-threatening injuries
Seatbelt Use: No

Minnehaha County, S.D.- A Sunday evening ATV crash claimed the life of one and severely injured another near Garretson, SD.

The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2022 Polaris ATV was traveling north on 487th Avenue, a gravel road, lost control and entered the ditch. The vehicle rolled, ejecting both occupants. A 16-year-old female occupant received fatal injuries and a 30-year-old male occupant was transported to a nearby hospital with life-threatening injuries. Neither was using their seatbelt. Determination of who was driving is under investigation.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Names Released in Lincoln County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: 294th Street and 474th Avenue, five miles northeast of Beresford, SD

When: 5:45 a.m., Friday, July 19, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2019 Jeep Cherokee

Driver 1: Darrian O'Neal Cline, 28-year-old male from Smithville, OK, fatal injuries

Seatbelt Use: No

Vehicle 2: Volvo Semi

Driver 2: Michael Dennis Stinton, 74-year-old male from LaMars, IA, minor injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Lincoln County, S.D.- A 28-year-old man suffered fatal injuries this morning in a two vehicle crash five miles northeast of Beresford, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Darrian O'Neal Cline, the driver of a 2019 Jeep Cherokee, was traveling eastbound on 294th Street near 474th Avenue. At the same time, Michael D. Stinton, the driver of a Volvo Semi, was traveling westbound on 294th Street. For an unknown reason, the Jeep crossed the center line into the westbound lanes and struck the semi head on.

Cline was not wearing a seatbelt and suffered fatal injuries. Stinton sustained minor injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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**SOUTH DAKOTA
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

Gravel road with higher risk awaits Sturgis Rally bikers

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

SILVER CITY, S.D. – On a recent drive through this super scenic area of the Black Hills, Ron Waterland saw with his own eyes the potential risks bikers will encounter when riding on gravel sections of U.S. 385 during the upcoming 2024 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Waterland has a cabin near Silver City, in the heart of the ongoing U.S. 385 construction project, and said the gravel will make the tight, winding two-lane highway even less safe than usual during the Aug. 2-11 event.

On July 14, Waterland drove from his home in Sturgis to his cabin and a light rain broke out. While on U.S. 385, he saw two motorcyclists who had wiped out on a section of gravel road that will be in place before, during and after the rally.

The two riders stood by angry, though unhurt, as their large touring bikes packed with gear lay on their sides. "They were really disgruntled," Waterland said.

Waterland is an experienced biker and former Sturgis City Council member who led the annual Mayor's Ride along U.S. 385 during numerous past rallies. He is one of many rally veterans who are concerned that parts of U.S. 385 – the only major north-south highway through the central Black Hills – will consist of sections of gravel during the event that could draw a half-million bikers to Sturgis and its environs.

"Boy, it's a mess, and it's not a good place to ride a motorcycle right now," Waterland told News Watch. "It (the gravel) presents stability issues for people traveling through that area, and they're going to take more of a risk than usual."

Widening the road, smoothing out curves on Highway 385

The South Dakota Department of Transportation has embarked on a \$72 million project to rebuild 15 miles of U.S. 385, which is a popular and scenic drive, but one that also has a rate of crashes and fatalities that is double the state average.

The highway is the main link between popular destinations of Sturgis, Lead and Deadwood on the north, and Hill City, Custer and Mount Rushmore National Memorial on the south. The two-lane highway winds around the scenic lakes of Pactola and Sheridan and along giant rock outcroppings and dramatic ridge lines. It often carries a mix of passenger cars, commercial vehicles, motorcyclists and tourist RVs and campers. And it helps fuel a regional tourism industry that brought \$2 billion in revenue to South Dakota in 2021.

In the five-year period from 2018-2022 along the route, 187 crashes were reported, with four fatalities and 57 injuries. A third of those wrecks and most of the deaths occurred when motorists left the roadway, which in spots has almost no shoulder space while closely abutting rock walls or rimming atop significant drop-offs.

During the three-year project, DOT will widen road shoulders, smooth out sharp curves and add turn lanes to make the road safer for travel.

The DOT's goal is to cut the crash rate on the segment of highway by 50%, largely by eliminating tight curves, expanding sight lines for motorists or expanding shoulders from 2 to 8 feet, which has a proven success rate in reducing runoff wrecks.

South Dakota DOT says surfaces will be safe

The DOT issued a news release on July 12 indicating that U.S. 385 will be open to traffic in both directions during the remainder of 2024, including the Sturgis rally period. Construction work on the project will be paused from July 31 to August 12 to accommodate the event.

However, the DOT project website also said the speed limit will be reduced and the road will consist of

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sections of a "loose gravel surface" until late 2025, and that lane restrictions will cause delays of about 15 minutes in the area from Pactola Dam roughly to Silver City Road.

Two DOT engineers – Todd Seaman in Rapid City and Bruce Schroeder in Custer – said in an email to News Watch that they believe the gravel sections of U.S. 385 will be safe for rally bikers if they follow traffic laws, travel the posted speed limit and ride within the range of their experience level.

The engineers said the highway will have a "blotter surface" in place from state Highway 44 south to Pactola, which they said closely resembles asphalt. A roughly 2-mile stretch of U.S. 385 north of Highway 44 will be a gravel surface treated with magnesium chloride, which helps tamp down dust and can firm up the road surface, they said.

During the rally, U.S. 385 will also have a short, twisting section of gravel surface just south of the Pennington/Lawrence county line where a culvert is being built.

The engineers noted that U.S. 16 west of Custer had a gravel surface during the Sturgis rally a few years ago and did not create any safety issues. They urged people with questions about the U.S. 385 construction project to visit the state project website or sign up for text message updates by texting "us385" to 605-566-4041.

City of Sturgis re-routes Mayor's Ride for rally

The highway construction and the gravel surfaces prompted the city of Sturgis to re-route its annual Mayor's Ride, which typically takes a large group of bikers from the rally headquarters south on U.S. 385 to Mount Rushmore National Memorial and then to Custer State Park for lunch.

"Bikers hate gravel," said Sturgis city spokeswoman Deb Holland. "That's one of their biggest fears, that they're going to lose it because the gravel is not sturdy enough."

Holland said the 2024 Mayor's Ride will go instead to the Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming and finish with lunch at a restaurant in Belle Fourche, South Dakota.

"We've been talking for a year about how we had to adjust," Holland said. "The city recognized it early and wanted to plan something that wouldn't take us right into the belly of the beast."

Holland said the city estimates attendance will be fairly low for the 84th annual event this year, about 450,000 to 500,000. Prior reporting by News Watch showed that attendance in 2023 was about 458,000, a decline of more than 8% from 2022.

Holland said the inaugural flat track cycle races planned for a route through downtown Sturgis on Sunday, Aug. 11, should give the 2024 event a nice final-day boost of interest and attendance.

Holland said Sturgis rally bikers know that there are a few places where gravel is likely to be present, and that they must be more careful in those areas. She said a few campground entrances can pick up loose gravel and noted that the Fort Meade Way backroad to the Sturgis Buffalo Chip has been gravel for years, though it has been treated with magnesium chloride and has become firmer over time.

While urging riders to use caution during the U.S. 385 construction, expected to extend into 2027, Holland said she doesn't think the project will reduce rally attendance or dramatically change how bikers behave or where they ride during the event.

"In the big scheme of things, it'll just be a blip or a thorn in our sides," she said. "For two years, we can handle it, and in the long run I think everyone will appreciate what the state is doing to improve safety."

Riding on marbles or ball bearings

A 2016 article in "Rider Magazine" spoke to the uneasy feeling many bikers get when they travel on gravel.

"Why is it we get so uptight when things get loose underfoot (or under tire, as it were)?" the article stated. "Because things feel a little weird and unfamiliar on dirt. The motorcycle moves around more beneath us on unpaved surfaces, the front wheel seems to wander and the handlebars come alive in our sweaty palms."

Jon Doyen, 49, has been riding motorcycles since he was a boy and continues to do so as a recreational rider and also as a cycle test rider for Black Hills Harley-Davidson in Rapid City.

Doyen said gravel surfaces reduce traction for a cycle and limit the control a driver has while moving. He said gravel can be managed by going slower and being more careful, but that without a doubt the

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uneven surface creates more hazards for bikers.

"If you're on soft gravel, it can really grab your front tire," Doyen said.

Gravel also creates challenges when turning because even a few stones that accumulate where the gravel meets pavement can add risk while turning or even while stopping, he said.

"One little rock can be like a ball bearing or a marble," Doyen said. "You put your foot down and your foot will slide right out from underneath you."

Doyen looked down and shook his head while recalling the time a biker friend tried to stop on a gravel surface and his foot splayed outward. That caused the bike to fall and his groin area to split open, resulting in a painful surgery and recovery.

"That's a tough spot to get injured," he said. "It was gross because he had to change the dressings four or five times a day."

Waterland said the current gravel surface on U.S. 385 is tricky to navigate for experienced riders but can be extremely hazardous for inexperienced bikers, especially at night or in the rain.

"If you're an experienced rider, you can usually handle that, and I've ridden on muddy roads in the rain without a problem," he said.

Waterland added that while many rally riders have logged many miles behind the handlebars, there's always a good number of Sturgis visitors who are new to two-wheel travel.

"I think there's more inexperienced riders than you would think during the rally," he said. "Gravel is not a nice surface, and it's pretty easy for them to go down."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Bart Pfankuch at bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org.

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National and South Dakota Legislative News Connection

Washington- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) announced a significant increase in the concentrations equivalent level of concern (CE-LOC) for herbicide atrazine. CE-LOC is the level at which EPA determines that products such as atrazine will adversely affect aquatic plants and trigger required monitoring and mitigation to protect aquatic plants. EPA is raising atrazine's CE-LOC from 3.4 ppb to 9.7 ppb. OPP claims the increase will remove millions of watersheds, expected to exceed the former level of concern. Atrazine is a chlorinate triazine systemic herbicide that controls annual grasses and broadleaf weeds before they emerge selectively.

Washington- At a House Agriculture Committee hearing, Jeff Kippley, Vice President of the National Farmers Union and South Dakota Farmers Union, testified on behalf of the Farmers Union. The hearing, titled "Examining the Consequences of EPA's Actions on American Agriculture," allowed committee members to discuss various concerns with the EPA. During the hearing, Kippley addressed multiple topics from the Farmers Union's perspective, including Waters of the U.S., pesticide labeling concerns, PFAS cleanup, and biofuels regulation and their impact on the nation's agriculture sector. In addition, Vice President Kippley publicly thanked the EPA for clarifying the intent of the Clean Air Act to prevent equipment manufacturers from using it as an excuse to deny farmers the right to repair.

South Dakota News

Pierre - On Monday, the State of South Dakota closed the 2024 budget year with a surplus of \$80.7 million. South Dakota's government spent \$56.4 million less than appropriated in fiscal year 2024. The total revenue finished above the legislatively adopted forecast by \$24.3 million. South Dakota maintains a AAA credit rating and is one of the only states with fully funded pensions. Additionally, South Dakota has the lowest unemployment rate in America.

By law, the surplus from fiscal year 2024 was transferred to the state's budget reserves. The state's reserves total \$322.8 million, 13.3% of the fiscal year 2025 general budget fund.

Mitchell—The South Dakota Farmers Union congratulates Jack Davis, South Dakota State University's Extension Crops Business Management Specialist, on his upcoming retirement. Mr. Davis has served South Dakota's agriculture community for 30 years by working with team members on publications and programming. This includes land market surveys, farm financial trends of South Dakota farms, crop planning cost of production budgets, SDSU Extension Ag Profit Team, SDSU Extension Agriculture Lender's Conference, South Dakota Farm Economics Summit, and Sustaining the Legacy estate planning. With deep roots in South Dakota, Davis' combination of education and hands-on experience as a farmer and a teacher gave him a unique ability to connect with producers and understand their operations.

Davis's retirement open house will be held at the SDSU Extension Mitchell Regional Center on August 19, 2024, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. CDT.

South Dakota Planting & Production Progress

According to an updated news release from the National Agricultural Statistic Service (USDA, Northern Plains Region) the current percentages across South Dakota:

Corn Silking-27%

Corn Condition- 3% very poor, 5% poor, 23% fair, 54% good, 15% excellent

Soybeans Blooming- 22%, up from 14% the previous week

Soybean Setting Pods- 8%

Soybean Condition- 4% very poor, 7% poor, 23% fair, 54% good, 12% excellent

Sorghum Headed- 14%, up from 10% the previous week

Sorghum Condition- 23% fair, 69% good, 8% excellent

Winter Wheat Harvested- 15%, up from 9% the previous week

Spring Wheat Headed- 93%, up from 82% the previous week

Spring Wheat Condition- 1% very poor, 4% poor, 29% fair, 59% good, 7% excellent

Pasture and Range Condition- 5% very poor, 8% poor, 24% fair, 49% good, 14% excellent

Days Suitable for Fieldwork- 6.1

Topsoil Moisture Condition- 2% very short, 12% short, 72% adequate, 14% surplus

Subsoil Moisture Condition- 2% very short, 10% short, 76% adequate, 12% surplus

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Come Up Short Against Selby

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 fell to Selby 9-5 on Monday.

Selby were the first to get on the board in the first when Xavier Hobert doubled, scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 captured the lead, 2-1, in the bottom of the first after Selby committed an error, and Nicholas Morris doubled, each scoring one run.

A single by Carter Simon extended the Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 lead to 3-1 in the bottom of the second inning.

Kaden Russell singled on an 0-2 count, which helped Selby tie the game at three in the top of the fourth.

Selby flipped the game on its head in the top of the fifth, scoring five runs on five hits to take a 8-3 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a single by Luke Fiedler that drove in two.

Nick Groeblichhoff pitched three and two-thirds innings in relief for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The reliever surrendered eight hits and six runs (five earned) while, striking out seven and walking four. Tristin McGannon started on the mound for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher gave up three hits and three runs (two earned) over three and one-third innings, striking out two and walking four. Keegan Russell stepped on the hill first for Selby. The starting pitcher surrendered five hits and five runs (one earned) over five innings, striking out seven and walking seven.

Gavin Englund and Morris were a force together in the lineup, as they each collected two hits for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. Karsten Flihs went 1-for-3 at the plate as they led the team with two runs batted in. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 had a strong eye at the plate, accumulating seven walks for the game. Gavin Kroll and Kellen Antonsen led the team with two free passes each. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Selby tallied 11 hits in the game. Russell seized on their opportunities, leading Selby with three runs batted in from the number eight spot in the lineup. The infielder went 2-for-4 on the day. Russell led Selby with three hits in four at bats. Selby had patience at the plate, amassing eight walks for the game. Houston Hauge, Tristan Thompson, and Peyton Lutz led the team with two free passes each. Russell and Lutz each stole multiple bases for Selby. Selby ran wild on the base paths, piling up seven stolen bases for the game.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 welcome Selby on Monday for their next game.

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Beat Selby

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 outsted Selby 4-0 on Monday.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 opened the scoring in the first after Gavin Englund was struck by a pitch, driving in a run.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 added to their early lead in the bottom of the second inning after Selby dropped a third strike, and Carter Simon singled, each scoring one run.

Kellen Antonsen earned the win for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher surrendered five hits and zero runs over four and two-thirds innings, striking out five and walking none. Luke Fiedler took the loss for Selby. The right-handed pitcher went four innings, giving up four runs (two earned) on eight hits, striking out three and walking two.

Simon led Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with two runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 3-for-3 on the day. Lincoln Krause and Karsten Flihs each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 were sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Nicholas Morris made the most plays with five.

Fiedler led Selby with two hits in two at bats.

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Post 100 **0 - 4** Groton Jr. Legion Post
39

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	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
PST1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2
GRTN	1	2	0	1	X	4	8	0

BATTING

Post 100	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T Kihne #50 (1B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
L Fiedler #11 (P)	2	0	2	0	0	0
X Hobert #9 (SS)	2	0	1	0	0	0
K Russell #3 (CF)	2	0	1	0	0	0
X Ritter #15 (3B)	2	0	1	0	0	0
H Hauge #22 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	2
T Thomp... #17 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
M Kihne #4 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
K Fiedler #2 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
P Lutz #19 (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
E Hobert #8 (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
J Thompson #5	1	0	0	0	0	1
C Knudson #13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	19	0	5	0	0	5

TB: X Ritter, X Hobert, L Fiedler 2, K Russell, **LOB:** 5

Groton Jr. Legion Post	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2	2	1	2	0	1	0
C Simon #4 (DH)	3	0	3	2	0	0
G Englund #18 (3B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
J Erdmann #1 (1B)	1	0	0	0	1	0
N Groe... #12 (1B)	0	0	0	0	0	0
N Morris #17 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Jordan... #20 (CF)	2	0	1	0	0	0
T Schuster #3 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
A Abeln #5 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	0
T McGan... #9 (RF)	2	1	0	0	0	2
G Kroll #8 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
K Flihs #10	2	2	2	0	0	0
CR: R Shelle #6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	21	4	8	2	2	3

2B: L Krause, **TB:** K Flihs 2, C Simon 3, Jordan Schwan, L Krause 3, **HBP:** G Englund 2, **LOB:** 9

PITCHING

Post 100	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
L Fiedler #11	4.0	8	4	2	2	3	0
Totals	4.0	8	4	2	2	3	0

L: L Fiedler, **P-S:** L Fiedler 78-46, **WP:** L Fiedler, **HBP:** L Fiedler 2, **BF:** L Fiedler 25

Groton Jr. Legion Post	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Antonsen... #7	4.2	5	0	0	0	5	0
Totals	4.2	5	0	0	0	5	0

W: K Antonsen, **P-S:** K Antonsen 65-42, **BF:** K Antonsen 19

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Post 100 **9 - 5** Groton Jr. Legion Post
39

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
PST1	1	0	1	1	5	1	0	9	11	3
GRTN	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	5	8	4

BATTING

Post 100	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T Kihne #50 (CF)	1	1	1	0	0	0
L Fiedler #11 (SS)	5	0	1	2	0	2
X Hobert #9 (1B)	4	0	1	1	0	0
K Russell #3 (P)	4	2	3	1	0	0
X Ritter #15 (3B)	3	0	1	0	1	0
H Hauge #22 (C)	3	2	1	0	2	2
T Thomp... #17 (RF)	3	1	1	1	2	1
K Russell #34 (2B)	4	1	2	3	0	0
P Lutz #19 (LF)	1	1	0	0	2	1
K Fiedler #2 (2B)	3	0	0	0	1	3
CR: K Claymo... #33	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	31	9	11	8	8	9

2B: X Hobert, **TB:** H Hauge, X Hobert 2, X Ritter, L Fiedler, T Thompson, K Russell 2, T Kihne, K Russell 3, **CS:** P Lutz, **HBP:** P Lutz, X Hobert, X Ritter, T Kihne, K Russell, **SB:** P Lutz 2, X Ritter, T Thompson, K Russell 2, K Russell, **LOB:** 14

Groton Jr. Legion Post	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (LF)	4	1	1	0	0	0
C Simon #4 (SS)	4	0	1	1	0	1
J Erdmann #1 (CF)	4	1	1	0	0	0
G Englund #18 (C)	3	2	2	0	1	0
N Morris #17 (RF)	3	0	2	1	1	0
K Flihs #10 (DH)	3	0	1	2	1	1
N Groebl... #12 (1B)	3	0	0	0	0	2
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	1	1	0	0	2	1
G Kroll #8	1	0	0	0	2	1
R Shelle #6 (3B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
T McGan... #9 (P)	2	0	0	0	0	1
CR: Jord... #20 (CF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	29	5	8	4	7	7

2B: N Morris, **3B:** L Krause, **TB:** G Englund 2, N Morris 3, C Simon, J Erdmann, L Krause 3, K Flihs, **CS:** J Erdmann, **SB:** K Flihs, **LOB:** 10



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South Dakota Democratic delegates unanimously endorse Harris as presidential pick

Vice President has secured enough support from state-level delegates to secure nomination, AP poll finds

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 22, 2024 10:43 PM

The South Dakota delegates to the Democratic National Convention met virtually Monday night and voted unanimously to endorse Vice President Kamala Harris as their nominee in the 2024 presidential race.

In voting to endorse Harris, South Dakota Democrats fell in line with other state and national Democratic leaders who quickly followed the lead from President Joe Biden, who dropped out of the 2024 race via social media Sunday afternoon and endorsed Harris as his successor shortly thereafter.

Democrats in Nebraska, Maryland, Florida, New Hampshire, Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia were among the states where Democrats backed Harris as of Monday evening.

Harris has also picked up endorsements from key leaders at the national level. California Gov. Gavin Newsom, mentioned as a possible Democratic contender himself, endorsed Harris quickly on Sunday. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi endorsed Harris Monday. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries had not endorsed Harris as of Monday evening, but Jeffries said earlier in the day that Harris had "excited the House Democratic Caucus and she's exciting the country."

Late Monday evening, the New York Times, CNN and other national media organizations reported that Harris had secured the backing of more than the 1,976 delegates needed to win the nomination in the first round of voting at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago next month. The news came by way of a poll from The Associated Press, which broke the story.

The poll listed 2,668 delegates pledged to Harris and 54 undecided as of 10 p.m. CST Monday.

The Democratic National Committee will move forward with the process to formally nominate a presidential candidate Wednesday when its Rules Committee meets in a public virtual session amid ongoing efforts to set up a virtual roll call vote ahead of the convention next month in Chicago, according to reporting from States Newsroom.

South Dakota Democrats backed Biden with around 75% of the vote in the state's June 4 primary. In a news release, the South Dakota Democratic Party announced that its 20 voting delegates to the August convention had voted unanimously to back Harris.

"We thank President Biden for his leadership throughout his career and for choosing Kamala Harris four years ago to be his Vice President," said Delegate Chair Jessica Meyers. "Harris has proven that she is more than equipped to take on the Presidency and we as a delegation are looking forward to casting the official vote for her."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Freedom Scholarship update: \$10 million awarded, \$260,000 converted to loans

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 22, 2024 6:14 PM

SIOUX FALLS — A scholarship program that incentivizes graduates to stay and work in South Dakota has awarded 2,785 scholarships to 1,995 students in its first two years.

"Most all of them are going straight into the South Dakota workforce," said Freedom Scholarship Coordinator Elli Haerter.

The board that oversees the program revealed data from its first two years during a Monday meeting at First Premier Bank in Sioux Falls.

The scholarship was established by the South Dakota Legislature and supported by donations from entities like First Premier Bank, Avera, and Sanford Health. It offers scholarships based on financial need to students who attend South Dakota colleges and commit to remaining in the state for at least three years post-graduation.

Students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average to keep the \$1,000 to 5,000 scholarships, which students can earn across multiple school years.

With exceptions, the program converts the scholarships into loans with a fixed interest rate of 4% for students who do not meet the program's grade, graduation or post-graduation residency requirements.

In the program's first two years, 182 scholarship recipients have graduated and found work in the state, Haerter told the Freedom Scholarship Board on Monday. Fifty-five of them found work in healthcare; 40 are in the education sector.

The data shared Monday also included information on students who've failed to adhere to the scholarship requirements.

As of July, there were 143 scholarship recipients in that category. Specifically, 101 have been referred to a debt servicer for repayment, 15 have paid off the loans, five have had their debts forgiven and 22 have had their loans deferred. That's typically because the student is pursuing tech school or an apprenticeship instead of college, Haerter noted.

Board Chair Dana Dykhouse said the state should not convert scholarships to loans for awardees who leave college to pursue a technical degree.

"I don't think it should matter because, at the end of the day, we're still getting a South Dakota worker," he said. "And the state has a big need for workers."

About \$260,000 in scholarship dollars is now loans. Comparatively, around \$10 million in scholarships has been awarded, according to Haerter. She and Dykhouse said those numbers are good, and will only improve as the program gets better at identifying students in need who are likely to succeed with the scholarship.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

South Dakota Attorney General joins opposition to reclassifying weed as less-dangerous drug

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 22, 2024 6:09 PM

South Dakota's attorney general has joined counterparts in 10 other states in writing a letter of opposition to a Biden administration proposal that would reclassify marijuana from a Schedule I to a Schedule III substance.

Schedule I drugs are those classified by the federal government as those that have no medical use and are most prone to misuse. Drugs in schedules II-V each have some medical uses, and have less potential for abuse with each step down the scale.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley and attorneys general from Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, and South Carolina submitted a public letter Monday voicing their opposition to the proposal.

In the letter to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, they argue the proposal is invalid because it wasn't approved by appropriate Drug Enforcement Agency staff, and would violate international treaty obligations, they say. They also claim that the rescheduling lacks a legal basis and contradicts previous federal findings.

"South Dakota voters have legalized medical marijuana and will have the opportunity this election to determine whether to legalize recreational marijuana in our state," Jackley said in a press release. "The Biden administration's attempt to reschedule marijuana right before the election without proper authority will be harmful to states like South Dakota that have not fully legalized both medical and recreational marijuana."

Jackley said in the press release that a change in federal classification would not alter the enforcement of state laws regarding marijuana in South Dakota.

South Dakota voters will decide on Nov. 5 whether to legalize recreational marijuana, marking the third straight general election with such a measure. Voters backed it in 2020 as part of a constitutional amendment that sought to legalize medical and recreational marijuana. That vote was later challenged and overturned by the South Dakota Supreme Court, which decided that it violated the state constitution's single-subject rule by lumping together two types of cannabis use. A standalone recreational marijuana measure failed in the 2022 midterm elections.

Medical marijuana was approved in 2020 in a separate ballot initiative. The state issued its first medical marijuana cards in late 2021.

The 2024 petition, validated by the Secretary of State's Office, has secured enough signatures to be placed on the ballot. If approved, it would allow adults 21 and older to possess, grow, ingest, and distribute marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia, with certain restrictions.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Secret Service director faces mounting calls to resign over Trump assassination attempt

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JULY 22, 2024 6:23 PM

WASHINGTON — Congressional lawmakers on both sides of the aisle berated U.S. Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle on Monday over the agency's failures to prevent the attempted assassination against former President Donald J. Trump, urging her to resign amid dissatisfaction with her testimony.

Nine days since a 20-year-old shooter killed one rallygoer and injured two others with an AR-15 style rifle at a Trump campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, a slew of bipartisan investigations and actions have sprung up in an attempt to get to the bottom of the shooting that nearly killed the 2024 GOP presidential

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nominee. The gunman was killed at the scene.

"The Secret Service has a zero-fail mission, but it failed on July 13 and in the days leading up to the rally," Rep. James Comer, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, said in an opening statement to the panel's lengthy hearing on the attempted assassination.

"The Secret Service has thousands of employees and a significant budget, but it has now become the face of incompetence," Comer, a Kentucky Republican, said.

Cheatle, who testified after Comer subpoenaed her, said the assassination attempt is "the most significant operational failure of the Secret Service in decades" and acknowledged that she has taken, and will continue to take, accountability.

"I am responsible for leading the agency, and I am responsible for finding the answers to how this event occurred and making sure that it doesn't happen again," she added.

Both parties critical in questioning

Republicans and Democrats expressed extreme dissatisfaction over Cheatle's answers, with Comer and ranking Democrat Jamie Raskin of Maryland calling on Cheatle to resign in a joint letter following the hearing.

The two said Cheatle "failed to provide answers to basic questions regarding that stunning operational failure and to reassure the American people that the Secret Service has learned its lessons and begun to correct its systemic blunders and failures."

Lawmakers grilled Cheatle on how the gunman was able to execute the attack and access the roof where he conducted the shooting, how Trump was allowed to enter the stage with a "suspicious person" being identified and why she has not yet resigned from her post.

"Director Cheatle, because Donald Trump is alive — and thank God he is — you look incompetent. If Donald Trump had been killed, you would have looked culpable," said GOP Rep. Mike Turner of Ohio, who chairs the U.S. House Intelligence Committee.

Cheatle's testimony

During the hearing, Cheatle noted that she was answering questions she's able to answer "based on the fact that there are multiple ongoing investigations."

However, throughout the hearing, Cheatle did disclose that the Secret Service was alerted "somewhere between two and five times" about a "suspicious individual" prior to the shooting.

"You're full of s— today. You're just being completely dishonest," GOP South Carolina Rep. Nancy Mace said while asking Cheatle a series of "yes" or "no" questions, including whether this was a "colossal failure."

Rep. Melanie Stansbury, a New Mexico Democrat, said Cheatle's answers were "completely unsatisfactory."

"How could this happen? ... We need answers not just for the family members of the gentleman who was killed and those who were injured, but we need answers for our democracy, because as others have stated here today, we are in a highly politically charged environment right now," she said.

Rep. Byron Donalds was among the myriad lawmakers calling on Cheatle to step down, saying: "You do need to be fired immediately, and it is because this is gross incompetence."

"This is a joke, and Director, you're in charge, and that's why you need to go," Donalds, a Florida Republican, said.

GOP Rep. Lisa McClain of Michigan also voiced her frustration over Cheatle's answers.

"If you're gonna lead, you need to lead," McClain said. "If you wanna be in charge, then answer the question, or step aside and have someone with the courage and the guts to answer to the American people the questions that they deserve answers to."

Cheatle also took heat after saying that they were targeting an internal investigation to be complete within 60 days — a timeline that did not sit well with the committee.

Cheatle pointed out a number of Office of Inspector General investigations and the FBI's ongoing criminal investigation remain in progress while the agency conducted its own internal investigation.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New York Democrat, noted that November's elections are just more

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than 100 days away.

"So the notion of a report coming out in 60 days when the threat environment is so high in the United States — irrespective of party — is not acceptable," she said.

Calls for gun control

Some Democrats, including Raskin, used the hearing to highlight gun violence and pushed for a ban on AR-15s.

He noted another mass shooting the same day as the attempt on Trump's life killed four and injured at least 10 others at a Birmingham, Alabama, nightclub.

"This means, amazingly, that the Butler attack was not even the deadliest mass shooting to happen in America on that day," he said. "We have to find the courage and resolve to pass a ban on the AR-15 and other assault weapons."

Rep. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan pointed out that this year, the committee had not held a hearing on the "over 260 mass shootings that we've had, killing hundreds of people, injuring hundreds, changing their lives forever."

More investigations

On Monday, members of the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee, led by Chairman Mark Green, a Republican from Tennessee, visited the site of the rally. The committee also plans to hold a hearing on the assassination attempt in Washington Tuesday.

Republican Rep. Mike Kelly of Pennsylvania, whose district includes Butler, was also in attendance.

A proposal, submitted by Kelly, to establish a task force on the attempted assassination is scheduled for a vote on the House floor this week.

It would "investigate and fully examine all actions by any agency, Department, officer, or employee of the federal government, as well as State and local law enforcement or any other State or local government or private entities or individuals" related to the attempted assassination.

The task force would also issue a final report on its findings no later than Dec. 13.

Separately, President Joe Biden asked the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to launch an "independent security review" of the attempted assassination, and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on Sunday named a bipartisan panel to conduct a "45-day independent review" regarding the actions of the agency and state and local authorities before, during and in the aftermath of the July 13 rally.

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

South Dakota Democrats hopeful, not yet ready to endorse Harris as presidential nominee

Former aid to Democrats Daschle, Johnson see enthusiasm boost if VP earns party nod

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 22, 2024 5:44 PM

South Dakota Democrats are more optimistic about their party's chances of holding the White House following President Joe Biden's departure from the race, but state leaders have yet to coalesce around his chosen successor, Vice President Kamala Harris.

Not all party leaders in South Dakota have remained neutral, however.

Democrats in South Dakota's second-largest county by population, Pennington County, opted to endorse Harris. Pennington County Democratic Party Chair Annie Bachand issued a statement praising President Joe Biden for his "tremendous service to our country" following his announcement on Sunday.

Biden endorsed Harris shortly after announcing his departure.

"Vice President Harris has consistently demonstrated her leadership, resilience, and dedication to per-

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sonal freedom and the safety of our children," said Bachand, who leads the Democrats in Rapid City. "We are excited to campaign for a strong leader who embodies the principles of our party and our country."

The South Dakota Democratic Party has yet to endorse a replacement candidate for Biden.

Director Dan Ahlers praised Biden's leadership but said Monday that the party awaits guidance and will be watching as the nominating process takes shape.

The party issued a press release Monday morning noting that it would take its cues from the national party on the nomination. Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison pledged a "transparent and orderly process" for selecting the nominee.

The state party also heaped praise on the Biden administration for "doing more for South Dakota in four years than most presidents do in eight."

"He helped us recover from a devastating pandemic, made historic investments into our infrastructure, strengthened relations with Tribal Nations, protected our farmers and ranchers, made healthcare more affordable and defended people's individual freedoms," the press release said.

Erin Royer, who leads the Minnehaha County Democrats, said via text that the group's leadership had yet to meet to discuss backing a candidate. The Sioux Falls-based group is taking its cues from the state party, she said.

Mary Perpich is the chair for the Brookings County Democrats. She said her group is in the same position, having not met to formally discuss the question of potential presidential candidates.

"The Brookings County Democrats will support whomever is chosen as the party's candidate at the convention," Perpich said.

Reactions across the nation

Biden's withdrawal marks the latest in modern history for a party's presumptive nominee in a presidential contest. President Lyndon Johnson chose not to run for reelection in March of 1968. Vice President Hubert Humphrey went on to accept the party's nomination before losing in the general election to Richard Nixon.

Several state party leaders threw their support behind Harris on Sunday and Monday, though many others have taken positions similar to South Dakota's.

Democrats in Nebraska, Maryland, Florida, New Hampshire, Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia were among the states where Democrats backed Harris.

Indiana's state Democratic leader, however, told States Newsroom that Biden's delegates are "unattached" to candidates as the Democratic National Convention approaches. Maine, Kentucky and North Dakota are among the states whose parties have yet to back a candidate, though some leaders have endorsed Harris. Rhode Island democrats will meet Wednesday to vote on a Harris endorsement.

Harris has already scored several endorsements from key leaders at the national level. California Gov. Gavin Newsom, mentioned as a possible Democratic contender himself, endorsed Harris quickly on Sunday. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi endorsed Harris Monday. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries have not endorsed Harris, but Jeffries said Monday that Harris had "excited the House Democratic Caucus and she's exciting the country."

The DNC will move forward with the process to formally nominate a presidential candidate Wednesday when its Rules Committee meets in a public virtual session amid ongoing efforts to set up a virtual roll call vote ahead of the convention next month in Chicago.

Impact on national race, South Dakota ballot initiative

The excitement factor is important, said Drey Samuelson, a longtime democratic political operative.

Samuelson, who worked for former South Dakota Democratic Sen. Tom Daschle and former South Dakota Democratic Rep. Tim Johnson, is more hopeful about the 2024 presidential race today than he was before Biden's announcement.

"Biden withdrawing from the race will both increase the odds of holding the White House, but also doing a fair amount better in the down ballot races that depend on high voter turnout for the top of the ticket,"

Samuelson said. "Biden's poll numbers with Black voters, Hispanic voters, and young (voters) were all quite anemic, and there's every reason to believe that the nominee — which certainly seems like it's going to be Kamala Harris — will do a fair amount better."

The excitement factor is unlikely to sway South Dakota's choice for president, according to University of South Dakota Professor of Political Science Michael Card.

"It could reduce Trump's victory margin," Card said. "But I don't see anyone other than Donald Trump getting South Dakota's three electoral votes."

There are other potential positives if Harris — or a yet-unknown candidate — can reignite a sense of enthusiasm for the state's more liberal voters. South Dakota voters will decide on a ballot measure that would reinstate the right to abortion. The state's near-total abortion ban took effect in 2022 after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision that had legalized abortion nationwide for nearly 50 years.

Biden and Harris have both railed against the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision, but Harris has been particularly aggressive as a backer of reproductive rights on the campaign trail.

"This is someone who's very much wanting to overturn the overturning," Card said.

Card also said Harris' tenure as a prosecutor — she served as California's Attorney General before her career in the U.S. Senate began — could make it more difficult for Republicans to paint Democrats as soft on crime.

Even so, he understands the reticence in Harris endorsements from South Dakota's Democratic leadership. The nominating process is a procedural one tied to party rules at the national level.

"I can see why some would endorse Kamala Harris right away to try to give her momentum. The second part is that I can understand why a county would not make an endorsement, because the process will take place with the convention ... you want to follow the process, and that is to let the delegates vote."

Pete Stavrianos, a one-time operative for former South Dakota Senator and Democratic Presidential nominee George McGovern, sounded a cautious but hopeful note in a statement to South Dakota Searchlight on the question of Harris as the party's nominee. If the race is about the future, as opposed to who is responsible for the recent past of inflation or issues at the U.S. border, Stavrianos likes the Democrats' chances.

He said he hopes that if Harris becomes the party's nominee, that she makes a "bold VP pick" like Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to set up an all-woman ticket. Whitmer has endorsed Harris.

"Only such a pick will permit a contrast between Trump as an aging voice of the divisive political past and the Harris ticket as a preview of a more positive and practical problem-solving future," he said.

— South Dakota Searchlight reporter Joshua Haiar contributed to this report

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

VP Harris cites Biden's 'legacy of accomplishment' as endorsements pile up for her bid

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA, JACOB FISCHLER AND LIA CHIEN - JULY 22, 2024 5:40 PM

WASHINGTON — Vice President Kamala Harris' path to the Democratic nomination cleared Monday as she secured endorsements from potential rivals and other high-profile party members the day after President Joe Biden ended his reelection bid.

A swarm of Democratic legislative leaders, governors — including some thought to harbor presidential ambitions of their own — and influential unions as well as key outside groups endorsed her within 24 hours of Biden's unscheduled Sunday afternoon announcement, while no serious challenger emerged.

In Harris' first public appearance since Biden's announcement and endorsement of her, the vice president

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met with college sports champions at the White House. She opened her brief remarks with a tribute to Biden, who, while recovering from COVID-19, was "feeling much better" Monday, she said.

"Joe Biden's legacy of accomplishment over the past three years is unmatched in modern history," she said. "In one term, he has already surpassed the legacy of most presidents who have served two terms in office."

Campaign staffers greeted Harris with cheers late Monday afternoon as she visited the campaign's Wilmington, Delaware, headquarters, according to video from the Washington Post. The video showed a California flag had been hung at the campaign office and signs reading "Kamala" and "Harris for president" had been affixed alongside "Biden-Harris" placards on walls.

Several key Democrats had not publicly backed her by Monday afternoon. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York and former President Barack Obama had not offered endorsements.

Jeffries told reporters that he and Schumer were planning to meet with Harris "shortly." While Jeffries did not endorse Harris, he said she has "excited the House Democratic Caucus and she's exciting the country."

Congressional Dems line up behind Harris

But endorsements rolled in from Capitol Hill.

Top congressional Democrats like the No. 2 Senate Democrat, Dick Durbin of Illinois, and the No. 2 House Democrat, Rep. Katherine Clark of Massachusetts, also early Monday gave Harris their support.

And former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California said in a statement that she supported Harris and noted her work advocating for reproductive rights — a topic that Democrats have centered various campaigns on following the end of Roe v. Wade.

"Politically, make no mistake," Pelosi said. "Kamala Harris as a woman in politics is brilliantly astute — and I have full confidence that she will lead us to victory in November."

The chair of the campaign arm for House Democrats, Rep. Suzan DelBene of Washington, also gave her support to Harris.

Harris has also earned the backing of all the House Democratic leaders of influential congressional caucuses.

That includes Reps. Steven Horsford of Nevada of the Congressional Black Caucus, Nanette Barragán of California of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Pramila Jayapal of Washington of the Progressive Caucus and Judy Chu of California of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

Obama holds off

Obama did not yet endorse Harris but in a lengthy statement Sunday said he has "extraordinary confidence that the leaders of our party will be able to create a process from which an outstanding nominee emerges."

Similarly, in 2020 the former two-term president waited until Biden was formally nominated by the Democratic National Committee before he gave an endorsement.

The DNC will move forward with the process to formally nominate a presidential candidate Wednesday when its Rules Committee meets in a public virtual session amid ongoing efforts to set up a virtual roll call vote ahead of the convention next month in Chicago.

No serious challenger to Harris' nomination had emerged by Monday afternoon, as independent Sen. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia said in a morning MSNBC interview he would not seek the Democratic nomination.

Governors endorse Harris

Following Biden's endorsement of Harris, several Democratic governors have also offered their support for the vice president, including the governors speculated to be among Harris' choices for a running mate and would-be rivals for the nomination.

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Govs. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania, Andy Beshear of Kentucky, Roy Cooper of North Carolina, Wes Moore of Maryland and J.B. Pritzker of Illinois all offered their endorsements in the day since Biden withdrew from the race.

Beshear announced his support for Harris in a television interview Monday morning. He wouldn't say if he'd like to join Harris' ticket, but said in a statement on X that the vice president will "bring our country together and move us past the anger politics we've seen in recent years."

By Monday afternoon, every Democratic governor in the country had offered their support, including Jared Polis of Colorado, Tony Evers of Wisconsin, Phil Murphy of New Jersey, Laura Kelly of Kansas, Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico, Tim Walz of Minnesota, Katie Hobbs of Arizona, Janet Mills of Maine, Jay Inslee of Washington state, Tina Kotek of Oregon, Daniel McKee of Rhode Island and Maura Healey of Massachusetts.

State parties planning next moves

Several state parties endorsed Harris or indicated they would support her.

North Carolina Democrats voted to endorse Harris, NC Newsline reported.

At Beshear's request, Kentucky Democrats voted "overwhelmingly" to back Harris, the Kentucky Lantern reported.

New Hampshire's state party coalesced behind Harris at a Sunday evening meeting, according to the New Hampshire Bulletin.

Maine Democrats were scheduled to meet Monday night and are likely to consider a proposal to switch the party's support from Biden to Harris, the Maine Morning Star said.

Advocacy groups

Several influential Democrat-aligned organizations announced their support for Harris.

Emily's List, which works to elect Democratic women who favor abortion rights, tweeted its endorsement Sunday.

LGBTQ advocacy group Human Rights Campaign also backed Harris, noting her early support for marriage equality and other work on LGBTQ issues.

UnidosUS, a Latino civil rights group, also endorsed Harris.

Gen-Z for Change, formerly called TikTok for Biden, had withheld an endorsement of the president over his handling of the Israel-Hamas war in which more than 39,000 Palestinians have been killed. But quickly following the announcement from Biden to step out of the race, the organization gave an endorsement to Harris.

The political action committees of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Congressional Progressive Caucus also backed Harris.

Several unions jump in

Harris has also garnered the backing of several labor unions in the day since announcing her bid for office. The Service Employees International Union, which represents 2 million service workers including health care and property and public services, announced its endorsement for Harris Sunday.

In a written statement, SEIU President April Verrett said "SEIU is ALL IN" for Harris and that the vice president "has made sure to use every lever of government to do everything possible to make things better for working people."

The American Federation of Teachers unanimously endorsed Harris Sunday. AFT represents 1.7 million education professionals across the country, ranging from teachers and paraprofessionals to school health care workers and higher education faculty.

The United Farm Workers also quickly switched its support from Biden to Harris on Sunday afternoon. The union said it "could not be prouder to endorse her for President of the United States," in a written statement, citing her support of farm workers during her time as an attorney general and senator in California.

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SEIU, AFT and UFW all endorsed Biden for president in 2020 and this year prior to his withdrawal from the race.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters has not endorsed in the presidential race, but invited Harris to a roundtable with rank-and-file members. Teamsters President Sean O'Brien addressed the Republican National Convention last week. The union endorsed Biden in 2020 but had not voiced its support for his reelection this year.

Notably, the UAW has not announced an endorsement for Harris. Biden walked the picket line in Michigan during the historic autoworker protests last September. The UAW thanked Biden for his service in a statement Sunday.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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DNC panel to meet in public to set 'transparent, fair' framework to pick presidential nominee

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JULY 22, 2024 10:20 AM

WASHINGTON — The Democratic National Committee will move forward with the process to formally nominate a presidential candidate Wednesday when one of its committees meets in public amid ongoing efforts to set up a virtual roll call vote ahead of the convention, States Newsroom has been told.

The nomination process has been playing out for months as the DNC committees with jurisdiction have been meeting to iron out the details for a virtual roll call.

The need for a virtual roll call was triggered by deadlines in Ohio and some other states that required the political parties to have their nominee certified before or during the Democratic National Convention, scheduled to take place from Aug. 19 to Aug. 22.

Following President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw from the race and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris, the co-chairs of the DNC Rules Committee announced that it will be the panel's "responsibility to implement a framework to select a new nominee, which will be open, transparent, fair, and orderly," according to an individual familiar with their statement.

The committee is scheduled to meet publicly on Wednesday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern. The meeting will be live-streamed on the DNC's YouTube page.

DNC Rules Committee Co-Chairs Bishop Leah D. Daughtry and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said the "process presented for consideration will be comprehensive, it will be fair, and it will be expeditious," according to an individual close to the process who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

States strike out on their own on AI, privacy regulation

South Dakota criminalizes computer-generated, sexually explicit images of children

BY: PAIGE GROSS - JULY 22, 2024 6:00 AM

As congressional sessions have passed without any new federal artificial intelligence laws, state legislators are striking out on their own to regulate the technologies in the meantime.

Colorado just signed into effect one of the most sweeping regulatory laws in the country, which sets guardrails for companies that develop and use AI. Its focus is mitigating consumer harm and discrimination by AI systems, and Gov. Jared Polis, a Democrat, said he hopes the conversations will continue on the state and federal level.

Other states, like New Mexico, have focused on regulating how computer generated images can appear in media and political campaigns. Some, like Iowa, have criminalized sexually charged computer-generated images, especially when they portray children.

"We can't just sit and wait," Delaware state Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Wilmington, who has sponsored AI regulation, told States Newsroom. "These are issues that our constituents are demanding protections on, rightfully so."

Griffith is the sponsor of the Delaware Personal Data Privacy Act, which was signed last year, and will take effect on Jan. 1, 2025. The law will give residents the right to know what information is being collected by companies, correct any inaccuracies in data or request to have that data deleted. The bill is similar to other state laws around the country that address how personal data can be used.

There's been no shortage of tech regulation bills in Congress, but none have passed. The 118th congress saw bills relating to imposing restrictions on artificial intelligence models that are deemed high risk, creating regulatory authorities to oversee AI development, imposing transparency requirements on evolving technologies and protecting consumers through liability measures.

In April, a new draft of the American Privacy Rights act of 2024 was introduced, and in May, the Bipartisan Senate Artificial Intelligence Working Group released a roadmap for AI policy which aims to support federal investment in AI while safeguarding the risks of the technology.

Griffith also introduced a bill this year to create the Delaware Artificial Intelligence Commission, and said that if the state stands idly by, they'll fall behind on these already quickly evolving technologies.

"The longer we wait, the more behind we are in understanding how it's being utilized, stopping or preventing potential damage from happening, or even not being able to harness some of the efficiency that comes with it that might help government services and might help individuals live better lives," Griffith said.

States have been legislating about AI since at least 2019, but bills relating to AI have increased significantly in the last two years. From January through June of this year, there have been more than 300 introduced, said Heather Morton, who tracks state legislation as an analyst for the nonpartisan National Conference of State Legislatures.

Also so far this year, 11 new states have enacted laws about how to use, regulate or place checks and balances on AI, bringing the total to 28 states with AI legislation.

How are everyday people interacting with AI?

Technologists have been experimenting with decision-making algorithms for decades — early frameworks date back to the 1950s. But generative AI, which can generate images, language, and responses to prompts in seconds, is what's driven the industry in the last few years.

Many Americans have been interacting with artificial intelligence their whole lives, and industries like banking, marketing and entertainment have built much of their modern business practices upon AI systems. These technologies have become the backbone of huge developments like power grids and space exploration.

Most people are more aware of their smaller uses, like a company's online customer service chatbot or asking their Alexa or Google Assistant devices for information about the weather.

Rachel Wright, a policy analyst for the Council of State Governments, pinpointed a potential turning point

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in the public consciousness of AI, which may have added urgency for legislators to act.

"I think 2022 is a big year because of ChatGPT," Wright said. "It was kind of the first point in which members of the public were really interacting with an AI system or a generative AI system, like ChatGPT, for the first time."

Competing interests: Industry vs privacy

Andrew Gamino-Cheong cofounded AI governance management platform Trustible early last year as the states began to pump out legislation. The platform helps organizations identify risky uses of AI and comply with regulations that have already been put in place.

Both state and federal legislators understand the risk in passing new AI laws: too many regulations on AI can be seen as stifling innovation, while unchecked AI could raise privacy problems or perpetuate discrimination.

Colorado's law is an example of this — it applies to developers on "high-risk" systems which make consequential decisions relating to hiring, banking and housing. It says these developers have a responsibility to avoid creating algorithms that could have biases against certain groups or traits. The law dictates that instances of this "algorithmic discrimination" need to be reported to the attorney general's office.

At the time, Logan Cerkovnik, the founder and CEO of Denver-based Thumper.ai, called the bill "wide-reaching" but well-intentioned, saying his developers will have to think about how the major social changes in the bill are supposed to work.

"Are we shifting from actual discrimination to the risk of discrimination before it happens?" he added.

But Delaware's Rep. Griffith said that these life-changing decisions, like getting approved for a mortgage, should be transparent and traceable. If she's denied a mortgage due to a mistake in an algorithm, how could she appeal?

"I think that also helps us understand where the technology is going wrong," she said. "We need to know where it's going right, but we also have to understand where it's going wrong."

Some who work in the development of big tech see federal or state regulations of AI as potentially stifling to innovation. But Gamino-Cheong said he actually thinks some of this "patchwork" legislation by states could create pressure for some clear federal action from lawmakers who see AI as a huge growth area for the U.S.

"I think that's one area where the privacy and AI discussions could diverge a little bit, that there's a competitive, even national security angle, to investing in AI," he said.

How are states regulating AI?

Wright published research late last year on AI's role in the states, categorizing the approaches states were using to create protections around the technology. Many of the 29 laws enacted at that point focused on creating avenues for stakeholder groups to meet and collaborate on how to use and regulate AI. Others recognize possible innovations enabled by AI, but regulate data privacy.

Transparency, protection from discrimination and accountability are other major themes in the states' legislation. Since the start of 2024, laws that touch on the use of AI in political campaigns, schooling, crime data, sexual offenses and deepfakes — convincing computer-generated likenesses — have been passed, broadening the scope in how a law can regulate AI. Now, 28 states have passed nearly 60 laws.

Here's a look at where legislation stands in July 2024, in broad categorization:

Interdisciplinary collaboration and oversight

Many states have enacted laws that bring together lawmakers, tech industry professionals, academics and business owners to oversee and consult on the design, development and use of AI. Sometimes in the form of councils or working groups, they are often on the lookout for unintended, yet foreseeable, impacts of unsafe or ineffective AI systems. This includes Alabama (SB 78), Illinois (HB 3563), Indiana (S 150), New York (AB A4969, SB S3971B and A 8808), Texas (HB 2060, 2023), Vermont (HB 378 and HB

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410), California (AB 302), Louisiana (SCR 49), Oregon (H 4153), Colorado (SB 24-205), Louisiana (SCR 49), Maryland (S 818), Tennessee (H 2325), Texas (HB 2060), Virginia (S 487), Wisconsin (S 5838) and West Virginia (H 5690).

Data Privacy

Second most common are laws that look at data privacy and protect individuals from misuse of consumer data. Commonly, these laws create regulations about how AI systems can collect data and what it can do with it. These states include California (AB 375), Colorado (SB 21-190), Connecticut (SB 6 and SB 1103), Delaware (HB 154), Indiana (SB 5), Iowa (SF 262), Montana (SB 384), Oregon (SB 619), Tennessee (HB 1181), Texas (HB 4), Utah (S 149) and Virginia (SB 1392).

Transparency

Some states have enacted laws that inform people that AI is being used. This is most commonly done by requiring businesses to disclose when and how it's in use. For example, an employer may have to get permission from employees to use an AI system that collects data about them. These states have transparency laws: California (SB 1001), Florida (S 1680), Illinois (HB 2557), and Maryland (HB 1202).

Protection from discrimination

These laws often require that AI systems are designed with equity in mind, and avoid "algorithmic discrimination," where an AI system can contribute to different treatment of people based on race, ethnicity, sex, religion or disability, among other things. Often these laws play out in the criminal justice system, in hiring, in banking or other positions where a computer algorithm is making life-changing decisions. This includes California (SB 36), Colorado (SB 21-169), Illinois (HB 0053), and Utah (H 366).

Elections

Laws focusing on AI in elections have been passed in the last two years, and primarily either ban messaging and images created by AI or at least require specific disclaimers about the use of AI in campaign materials. This includes Alabama (HB 172), Arizona (HB 2394), Idaho (HB 664), Florida (HB 919), New Mexico (HB 182), Oregon (SB 1571), Utah (SB 131), and Wisconsin (SB 664).

Schools

States that have passed laws relating to AI in education mainly provide requirements for the use of AI tools. Florida (HB 1361) outlines how tools may be used to customize and accelerate learning, and Tennessee (S 1711) instructs schools to create an AI policy for the 2024-25 school year which describes how the board will enforce its policy.

Computer-generated sexual images

The states which have passed laws about computer-generated explicit images criminalize the creation of sexually explicit images of children with the use of AI. These include Iowa (HF 2240) and South Dakota (S 79).

Looking forward

While most of the AI laws enacted have focused on protecting users from the harms of AI, many legislators are also excited by its potential.

A recent study by the World Economic Forum has found that artificial intelligence technologies could lead to the creation of about 97 million new jobs worldwide by 2025, outpacing the approximately 85 million jobs displaced to technology or machines.

Rep. Griffith is looking forward to digging more into the technologies' capabilities in a working group, saying it's challenging to legislate about technology that changes so rapidly, but it's also fun.

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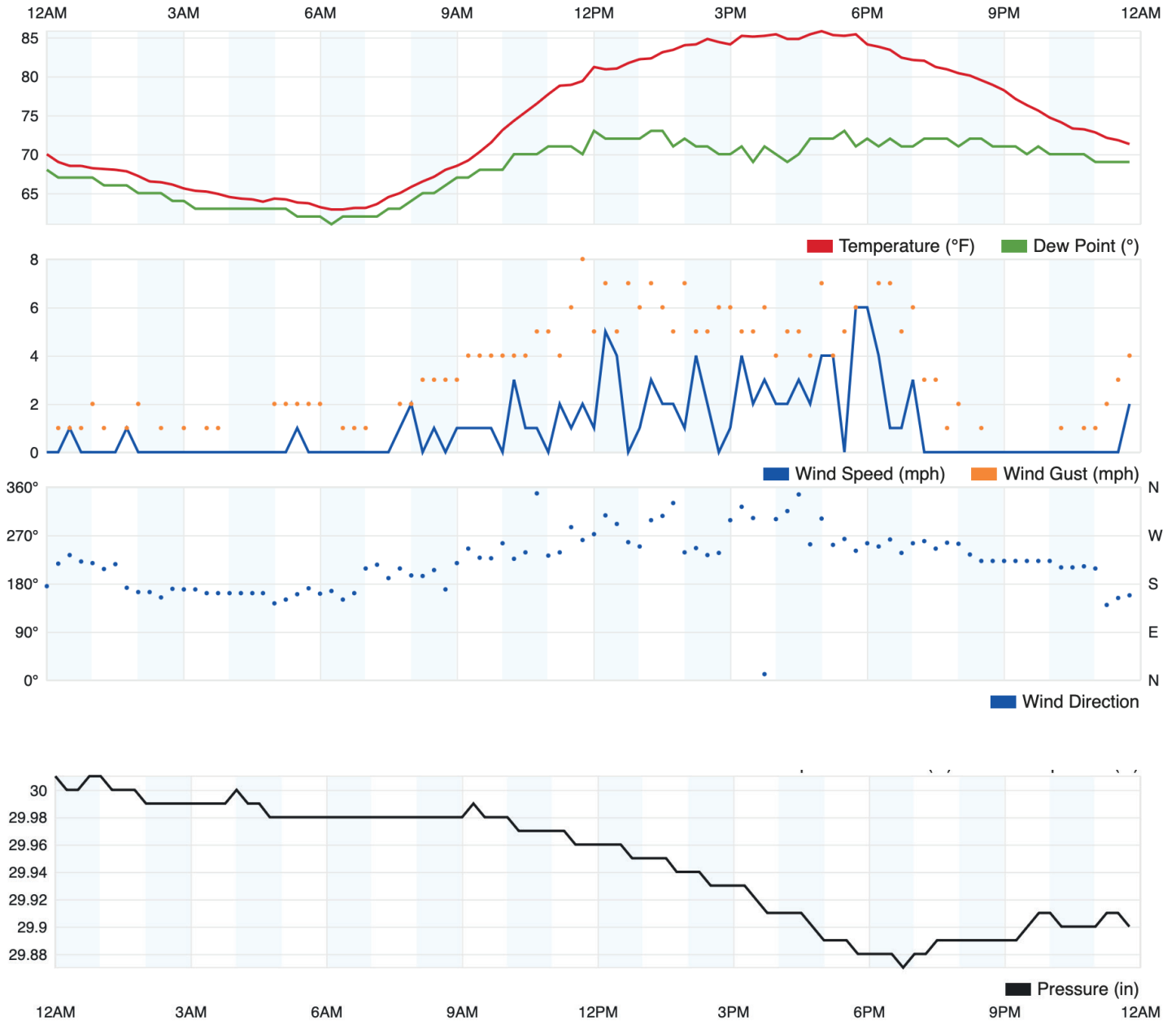
"Sometimes the tendency when something's complicated or challenging or difficult to understand is like, you just want to run and stick your head under the blanket," she said. "But it's like, everybody stop. Let's look at it, let's understand it, let's read about it. Let's have an honest discussion about how it's being utilized and how it's helping."

Paige Gross is a Philadelphia-based reporter covering the evolving technology industry for States Newsroom. Her coverage involves how congress and individual states are regulating new and growing technologies, how technology plays a role in our everyday lives and what people ought to know to interact with technology.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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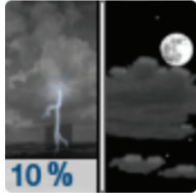
Today



High: 86 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

Tonight



Low: 63 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Partly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 86 °F

Mostly Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: 66 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday

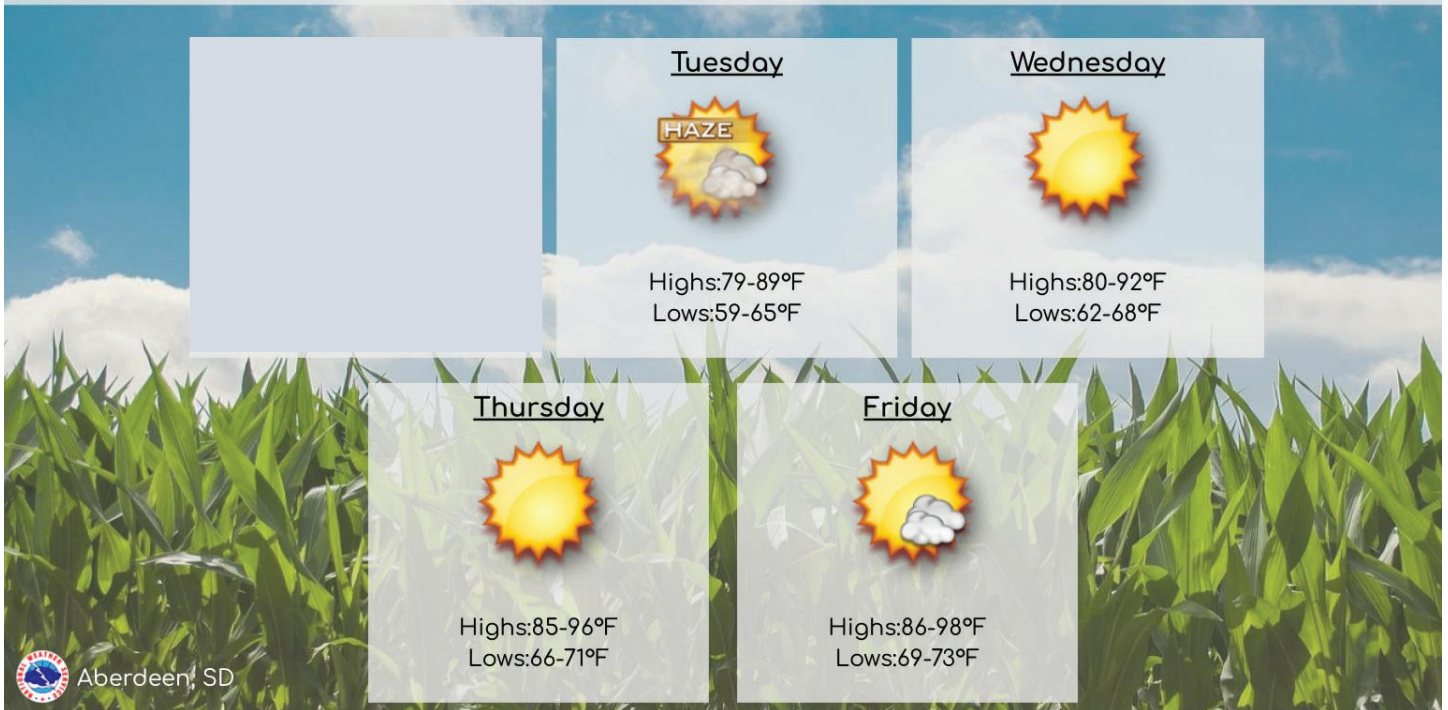


High: 91 °F

Hot

5-Day Forecast

July 22, 2024 1:22 PM



There will be some hazy skies from Canadian wildfire smoke today. Temperatures will start to warm up through the week with mostly sunny to sunny skies. Enjoy the sunshine this week!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 5:00 PM

Low Temp: 63 °F at 6:16 AM

Wind: 9 mph at 6:22 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 6 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1941

Record Low: 41 in 1904

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.44

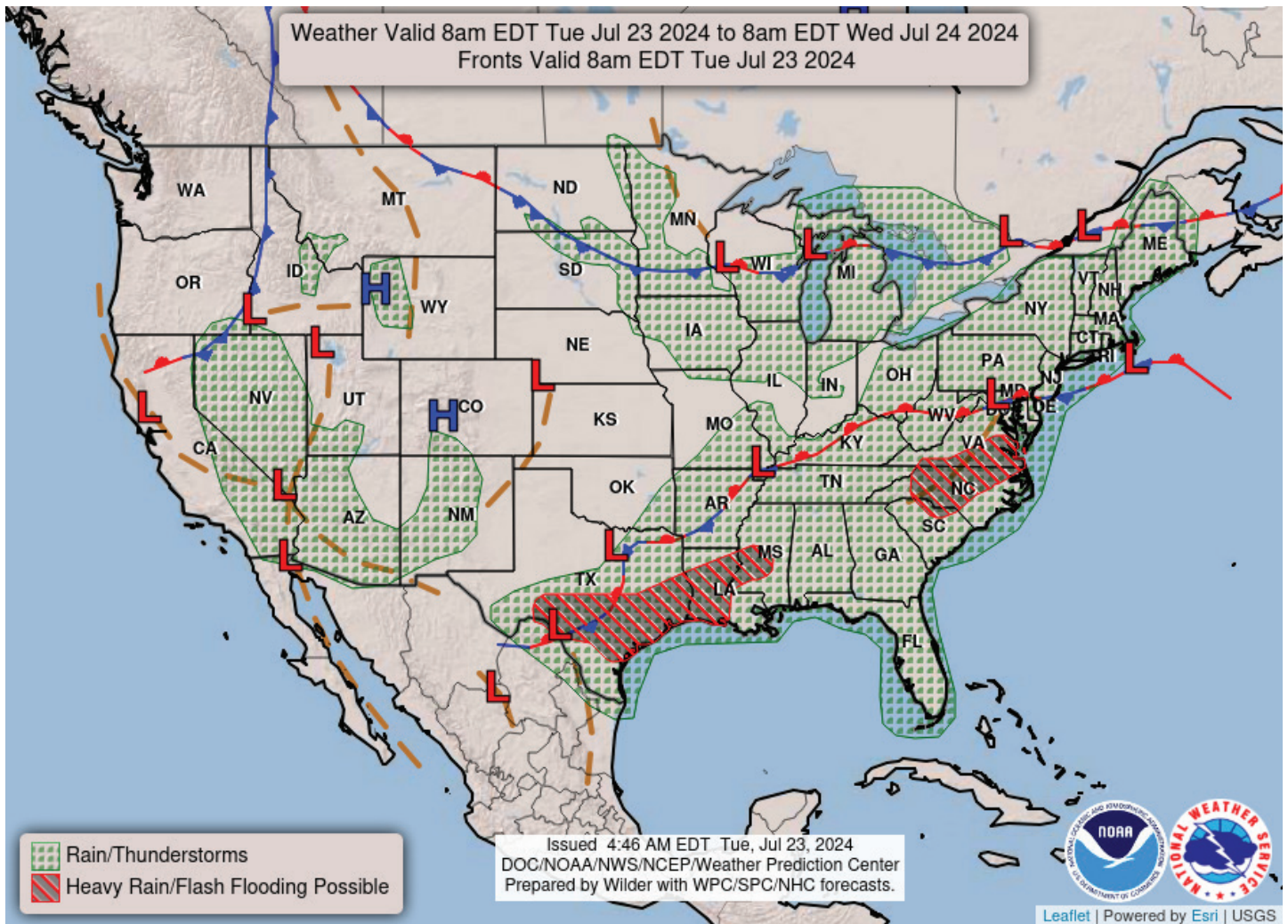
Precip to date in July: 3.56

Average Precip to date: 13.45

Precip Year to Date: 14.51

Sunset Tonight: 9:12:09 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:06:48 am



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Today in Weather History

July 23, 2007: High heat indices along with very little wind contributed to the deaths of over 2800 cattle in Brown, Spink, Day, and Marshall Counties. Most of the cattle deaths occurred on July 23rd. The high heat indices continued through the 25th with some more cattle deaths, but protective measures kept the death count down. Most of the cattle that died were on feedlots. The total loss was around 3 million dollars.

July 23, 2010: A United States record setting hailstone fell from a powerful supercell thunderstorm moving southeast across central South Dakota. The record setting hailstone fell near Vivian, South Dakota and measured 8 inches in diameter, 18.625 inches in circumference, and weighed 1.9375 pounds. This hailstone broke the previous United States record for diameter (7.0 inches - 22 June 2003 in Aurora, NE) and weight (1.67 pounds - 3 September 1970 in Coffeyville, KS). The Aurora, Nebraska hailstone will retain the record for circumference (18.75 inches). Several other stones of 6 inches or more in diameter were measured during the storm survey.

Along with the huge hail, damaging winds more than 70 mph along with an isolated tornado occurred. The large hail and high winds caused extensive damage to homes, outbuildings, and vehicles as it moved southeast across the region. Some of the hail went entirely through car windshields, roofs, garages, and campers. The hail caused five minor injuries to motorists on Interstate 90 as it went through their windshields. A child was severely injured when the large hail completely shattered the glass in the mini-van he was traveling. The child suffered numerous cuts, many requiring stitches.

1788: Called the George Washington's Hurricane, this storm originated near Bermuda on the 19th before making landfall in Virginia. It passed directly over the Lower Chesapeake Bay and Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington. This track is very similar to the path of the Chesapeake-Potomac hurricane of 1933. At Norfolk, winds increased at 5 p.m. on the 23rd with the wind originating from the northeast. At 12:30 a.m., the wind suddenly shifted to the south and "blew a perfect hurricane, tearing down chimneys, fences"...some corn was also leveled. Also, large trees were uprooted, and houses were moved from their foundations.

Port Royal and Hobb's Hole experienced a violent northeast gale which drove several vessels ashore. In Fredricksburg, vast quantities of corn, tobacco, and fruit were destroyed. Houses and trees fell in significant numbers across Northumberland, Lancaster, Richmond, and Westmoreland counties. Crops were destroyed, and many livestock perished in Lower Mathews County. Many plantations saw their houses leveled. Homes were flooded with water six feet deep, and several inhabitants drowned.

Historical figures of the time logged the storm's antics. George Washington noted the sinking of the small ship Federalist and uprooted trees. Colonel James Madison, the father of the future president, experienced the passing of great winds and rains near Orange. In Alexandria, damage to wheat, tobacco, and corn was "beyond description." The information above is from the Weather Prediction Center and noted American historian David Ludlum.

1898 - A two hour thunderstorm deluged Atlanta, GA, with 4.32 inches of rain. More than a foot of water flooded Union Depot. Many street car motors burned out while trying to run through flooded streets. It grew so dark before the afternoon storm that gas lights were needed. (The Weather Channel)

1923 - Sheridan, WY, was drenched with 4.41 inches of rain, an all-time 24 hour record for that location. Associated flooding washed out 20 miles of railroad track. (22nd-23rd) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced a record ten inches of rain in six and a half hours at Minneapolis, MN, including 5.26 inches in two hours. Flash flooding claimed two lives and caused 21.3 million dollars damage. Streets in Minneapolis became rushing rivers, parking lots became lakes, and storm sewers spouted like geysers. A tornado hit Maple Grove, MN, causing five million dollars damage. Baseball size hail was reported at Olivia, MN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2011: Chicago set an all-time daily record rainfall when 6.86 inches fell during the early morning hours of Saturday, July 23, 2011, at O'Hare airport. The previous daily record was 6.64 inches set on September 13, 2008.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THROUGH IS NOT THE END

A patient, waiting for his appointment, began leafing through a copy of Who's Who in America. After several moments he closed the book. A patient seated next to him asked if he was looking for his name or someone he knew.

"No," he replied, sadly. "I'm listed in Who's Through."

Obviously he did not know the Lord. For anyone who turns to Him at any time will be met with open arms and given an opportunity to embark on a new beginning.

David made this abundantly clear when he wrote, "I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire,...set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along."

People who do not know God often think that they have to pull themselves up by their "bootstraps." But what God did for David He can and will do for everyone!

This powerful Psalm describes what God can do for anyone at any time. God will not only rescue us from the depths of our despair, but place us on solid ground, steady us with His strength, as we begin a new walk with Him and give us a new song to sing along the path that He has prepared for us.

Prayer: How grateful we are, Father, that no one is ever beyond Your love or grace, salvation or mercy. May we recognize Your power to redeem and rescue us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. Psalm 40



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.19.24

10 17 23 50 67 3

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$279,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.22.24

2 12 15 43 52 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$5,660,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 8 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.22.24

17 19 20 28 29 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 23 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.20.24

10 20 22 24 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$43,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 23 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.22.24

17 34 44 49 66 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 52 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.22.24

31 36 56 58 69 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$114,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 52 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- 08/02/2024 Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

News from the Associated Press

Biles, Osaka and Phelps spoke up about mental health. Has anything changed for the Paris Olympics?

By HOWARD FENDRICH and EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writers

Lydia Jacoby was a breakout star in the pool for the United States at the last Summer Games, earning a gold medal in the 100-meter breaststroke and a relay silver. Part of what comes to mind from those heady days in Tokyo? "People talking about post-Olympic depression," she said.

She was 17 at the time, and her initial response when other athletes brought up the topic was: "Well, that doesn't apply to me."

"I essentially did not understand the topic of depression," she said. "It wasn't until after the Games that I was like, 'Oh. ... OK. Yeah, I'm feeling this a little.'"

Jacoby, who didn't qualify for the 2024 Olympics, is now fully aware of the phenomenon, went through it, moved past it and discusses it casually, all of which points to the way things have changed in just a few years when it comes to mental health.

As the Paris Games open on Friday, followed by the Paralympics beginning Aug. 28, athletes have more access than ever to resources in that once-taboo realm and sound more willing than ever to use them. That seems particularly significant given that Jessica Bartley, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee's senior director of psychological services, says about half of the country's athletes at the past two Olympiads were flagged for at least one of the following: anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, eating disorders, substance use or abuse.

"We really are just a part of the conversation now," Bartley said, "and not an afterthought or something when someone's struggling."

Among the key questions now: Is everyone going to seek the help they need? And is enough help available?

As for the first, Bartley said: "I'd like to think we're over the hump, but we're still not quite there. I feel like there is still some stigma. I think there's still some connections to 'weakness.'"

And the second? "I do think there still could be more," track star Gabby Thomas said, "but, I mean, they're there."

Olympians Simone Biles, Naomi Osaka and Michael Phelps opened doors

Three Olympians — Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka, who participated in the last pandemic-delayed Summer Games, and are returning, and retired swimmer Michael Phelps, who has more medals than anyone in any sport — provided some of the loudest voices in the growing global conversation in sports and society at large about the importance of protecting, gauging and improving the state of one's mind as much as one's body.

Phelps spoke about having suicidal thoughts at the height of his career and helped produce a documentary about depression among Olympians. He also called on the International Olympic Committee and USOPC to do more.

"I do think there's something to be said when a lot of really, really good athletes kind of talk about the same issue. I know all athletes don't feel the same way; you have to be a certain type or in a certain head space. Some people just feel things differently," said Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam champion and former No. 1-ranked player in tennis who lit the cauldron in Japan.

She's been forthcoming about her bouts with anxiety and depression and was among the first sports figures to take mental-health breaks away from competition, paving the way for others.

Osaka, in turn, said she felt "very heard" when she listened to Biles and Phelps.

"I'm pretty sure a lot of different athletes also felt heard," Osaka said. "They didn't feel like it was a weakness or anything like that, so I'm really glad we all talked about it."

Biles, who redefined excellence in gymnastics and picked up seven Olympic medals along the way, drew

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attention and, from some, criticism, for pulling out of events in Tokyo because of a mental block — known in the gymnastics world as “the twisties” — that made her afraid to attempt certain dangerous moves.

That her explanations of what went awry came in such a public setting, as THE biggest star in Tokyo, only made it all the more meaningful to other athletes.

“She didn’t have to,” said basketball player Breanna Stewart, a WNBA MVP. “She used her platform to help others.”

What Biles did resonated with athletes like canoeist Nevin Harrison, a gold medalist in Tokyo, who said “anxiety, fear, stress ... are all going to be huge parts in competing at such a high level.”

Biles made them see that there can be a way out.

“I was, at one time, in those shoes,” boxer Morelle McCane said, “where I was just like, ‘It’s do or die! It’s do or die!’”

How different is it for today’s Olympians?

Janet Evans won four swimming golds at the 1988 and 1992 Games and recalls the never-easing pressure to perform. In her day, she says, there wasn’t nearly the empathy or outlets for help available as there are for today’s Olympians.

“We didn’t talk about the struggles. No one taught me that it was OK to lose, right? I mean, I was Janet Evans, and when I went to a swim meet, I was supposed to win,” said Evans, the chief athlete officer for the 2028 Los Angeles Games. “We talk about it now and we recognize it with our athletes. And I think that is an important first step.”

Which means that even 38-year-old rugby player Perry Baker has seen changes since his Olympic debut at Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

“You had to tough it out. You kind of felt by yourself. You kind of felt like you couldn’t talk to anyone,” said Baker, who briefly was with the NFL’s Philadelphia Eagles.

The balance national Olympic committees must strike between caring about athletes as people but making sure the medals pile up is “threading a needle,” Evans acknowledged.

“We should go to the Olympics and Paralympics and win medals. But I don’t think that should be at the cost of how we’re preparing our athletes for the future,” Evans said. “Both can happen.”

That’s where Bartley and her counterparts in other countries and at the IOC come in.

The Beijing Winter Games two years ago were the first with extra credentials issued for national Olympic committees to bring athlete welfare officers — registered mental health professionals or qualified safeguarding experts — and more than 170 from more than 90 countries will be in Paris.

“We didn’t have it in Tokyo, and now it will be implemented for every Games,” said Kirsty Burrows, head of an IOC unit focused on athletes’ mental health. “Because we really see the impact.”

There will be a 24/7 helpline with mental health counselors who speak more than 70 languages, a program started for the Beijing Games but now available to every Olympian and Paralympian until four years after the event. There’s also AI to monitor athletes’ social media for cyberbullying, and a “mind zone” in the athletes village with a yoga area, low lighting, comfortable seating and other tools “dedicated to disconnection, decompression,” Burrows said.

The USOPC went from six mental-health providers 3 1/2 years ago to 15 now; 14 will be in France. Last year, 1,300 Team USA athletes participated in more than 6,000 therapy sessions set up by the USOPC.

“I expect the numbers to be even higher,” Bartley said, “especially in a Games year.”

Death toll in southern Ethiopia mudslides rises to at least 157 as search operations continue

By AMANUEL GEBREMEDHIN BIRHANE Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — At least 157 people were killed in mudslides in a remote part of Ethiopia that has been hit with heavy rainfall, many of them as they tried to rescue survivors of an earlier mudslide, local authorities said Tuesday.

Young children and pregnant women were among the victims of the mudslides in the Kencho Shacha

Gozdi district of southern Ethiopia, said Dagmawi Ayele, a local administrator.

The death toll rose from 55 late Monday to 157 on Tuesday as search operations continued in the area, said Kassahun Abayneh, head of the Gofa Zone communications office. Gofa Zone is the administrative area where the mudslides occurred.

Most of the victims were buried in a mudslide on Monday morning as rescue workers searched the steep terrain for survivors of another mudslide the previous day.

At least five people have been pulled alive from the mud, Ayele said.

Another official in Gofa, Markos Melese, said many people remained unaccounted for among the group that was covered by mud while trying to rescue others.

"We are still searching for the missing," said Melese, director of the disaster response agency in Gofa Zone.

"There are children who are hugging corpses, having lost their entire family, including mother, father, brother and sister, due to the accident," he said.

Landslides are common during Ethiopia's rainy season, which started in July and is expected to last until mid-September.

Hamas and Fatah sign declaration in Beijing on ending yearslong rift as war rages in Gaza

By JACK JEFFERY, TIA GOLDENBERG and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah signed a declaration in Beijing on ending a yearslong rift, Chinese state media said Tuesday, taking a step toward potentially resolving the deep divide between the sides as the war in Gaza rages on.

The declaration by the two heavyweights of Palestinian politics — and other smaller Palestinian groups — to form a unity government for the Palestinian territories is the result of the latest in a series of talks meant to unite the sides.

But previous declarations have failed, including a similar deal in 2011, casting doubt over whether the China-sponsored negotiations might actually lead to a resolution. It also comes as Israel and Hamas are weighing an internationally backed cease-fire proposal that would wind down the nine-month war and free dozens of Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

Still, the future of Gaza is undecided, with Israel vehemently opposed to any role by Hamas in governing Gaza. It has also rejected calls from the United States for the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority to run Gaza after the war ends. The lack of a postwar vision for running the Gaza Strip has complicated negotiations over a cease-fire.

Since the current war broke out in Gaza almost 10 months ago, Hamas officials have said that the party does not want to return to ruling Gaza as it did before the conflict, and the group has called for formation of a government of technocrats to be agreed upon by the various Palestinian factions, which would prepare the way for elections for both Gaza and the West Bank, with the intention of forming a unified government.

The two groups signed the Beijing Declaration on "ending division and strengthening Palestinian unity," according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Israel's Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, swiftly rejected the agreement Tuesday, stating that no joint governance between Hamas and Fatah in Gaza will take place "because Hamas's rule will be crushed."

The two rival Palestinian groups, along with 12 other political factions, met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, concluding talks that started Sunday, according to a post on social media platform Weibo from Chinese TV network CGTN.

The agreement also underscores China's growing role in Middle East diplomacy, with success in the restoration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

"But to be sure, China is still the process of trying to earn credibility as a global mediator," said James Char, a research fellow at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

A joint statement issued after the most recent talks in Beijing gave no details on how or when the govern-

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ment would be formed, saying only that it would be done "by agreement among the factions." According to the joint statement, the two groups are committed to the creation of a Palestinian state on lands Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

The deal does not appear to bridge the two group's diverging position on Israel. Hamas previously said it would accept a state based on 1967 borders, while also refusing to officially recognize Israel. The Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority, meanwhile, abides by interim peace agreements with Israel signed in the early 1990s.

The agreement signed by the Palestinian factions promised to follow up on previous reconciliation agreements signed in both 2011 and 2022.

"The understanding in China is based on widening the scope of the membership on the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) to include other factions who have not joined it" including Hamas, said Jamal Nazzal, a Fatah spokesperson.

"It's a long way ahead, and most of it will be implemented after a possible cease-fire," he added.

Fatah and Hamas have been rivals since Hamas violently routed forces loyal to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah in Gaza in 2007, taking over the impoverished coastal enclave. The Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority, headed by Abbas, administers parts of the occupied West Bank. It is widely viewed by the Palestinian public as corrupt, out of touch, and a subcontractor for Israel because of their joint security coordination.

Hamas members have never been part of PLO, the Palestinian government body responsible for international affairs. In a statement, Husam Badran, a Hamas political official based in Qatar, praised the agreement, describing it as a further "positive step towards achieving Palestinian national unity."

But Tuesday's deal doesn't have a hard timeline.

"There is an opportunity ... but it is not big, because it lacks a specific timetable for implementation," said Hani Al-Masry, an expert on Palestinian reconciliation affairs.

Repeated attempts at mending the rift have failed, wrecked by the factions' own bitter rivalry over power and the West's refusal to accept any government that includes Hamas unless it expressly recognizes Israel.

United States President Joe Biden's administration envisions a revamped Palestinian Authority to rule postwar Gaza and has sought a series of reforms that might make it a viable presence in the war-ravaged territory. Israel rejected that idea, but has not put forward a credible alternative for who will govern Gaza.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a smaller militant group allied with Hamas, issued a statement Tuesday after the talks saying that it still "rejects any formula that includes recognition of Israel explicitly or implicitly" and that it had "demanded the withdrawal of the Palestine Liberation Organization's recognition of Israel."

Harris to visit battleground Wisconsin in first rally as Democrats coalesce around her for president

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris is making her first visit to a battleground state Tuesday after locking up enough support from Democratic delegates to win her party's nomination to challenge former President Donald Trump, two days after President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid.

As the Democratic Party continues to coalesce around her, Harris is traveling to Milwaukee, where she will hold her first campaign rally since she launched her campaign on Sunday with Biden's endorsement. Harris has raised more than \$100 million since Sunday afternoon, and scored the backing of Democratic officials and political groups.

Tuesday's visit was scheduled before Biden ended his campaign, but took on new resonance as Harris prepared to take up the mantle of her party against Trump and looks to project calm and confidence after weeks of Democratic Party confusion over Biden's political future.

The visit comes a week after the Republican National Convention wrapped up in the city, and as Harris works to sharpen her message against the GOP nominee with just over 100 days until Election Day. Wisconsin is part of the Democrats' "blue wall" of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania that is critical to

their 2024 plans.

The vice president previewed the themes that will be prominent in her campaign against Trump on Monday during a stop at her campaign headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, contrasting her time as a prosecutor with Trump's felony convictions — "I know Donald Trump's type," she said — and casting herself as a defender of economic opportunity and abortion access.

"This election will present a clear choice between two different visions. Donald Trump wants to take our country back to a time before many of us had full freedoms and equal rights," she said in a statement responding to the AP delegate tally. "I believe in a future that strengthens our democracy, protects reproductive freedom and ensures every person has the opportunity to not just get by, but to get ahead."

"I am grateful to President Biden and everyone in the Democratic Party who has already put their faith in me, and I look forward to taking our case directly to the American people," she added.

By Monday night, Harris had the support of well more than the 1,976 delegates she'll need to win on a first ballot, according to the AP tally of delegates. No other candidate was named by a delegate contacted by the AP.

Still, the AP is not calling Harris the new presumptive nominee. That's because the convention delegates are still free to vote for the candidate of their choice at the convention in August or if Democrats go through with a virtual roll call ahead of that gathering in Chicago.

The AP tally is based on interviews with individual delegates, public statements from state parties, many of which have announced that their delegations are supporting Harris en masse, and public statements and endorsements from individual delegates.

Harris was to be joined by major elected officials in Wisconsin, including Gov. Tony Evers, Sen. Tammy Baldwin, Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez, Attorney General Josh Kaul, Secretary of State Sarah Godlewski and Wisconsin Democratic Party Chair Ben Wikler, as well as state labor leaders.

Harris has support of enough Democratic delegates to become party's presidential nominee: AP survey

By ZEKE MILLER, LEAH ASKARINAM, MAYA SWEEDLER and CHAD DAY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris has secured the support of enough Democratic delegates to become her party's nominee against Republican Donald Trump, according to an Associated Press survey, as top Democrats rallied to her in the aftermath of President Joe Biden's decision to drop his bid for reelection.

The quick coalescing behind Harris marked an attempt by the party to put weeks of internecine drama over Biden's political future behind them and to unify behind the task of defeating Trump with just over 100 days until Election Day. Prominent Democratic elected officials, party leaders and political organizations quickly lined up behind Harris in the day after Biden's exit from the race and her campaign set a new 24-hour record for presidential donations on Monday.

Several state delegations met late Monday to confirm their support for Harris, including Texas and her home state of California. By Monday night, Harris had the support of well more than the 1,976 delegates she'll need to win on a first ballot, according to the AP tally. No other candidate was named by a delegate contacted by the AP.

California state Democratic Chairman Rusty Hicks said 75% to 80% of the state's delegation were on a call Tuesday and they unanimously supported Harris.

"I've not heard anyone mentioning or calling for any other candidate," Hicks said. "Tonight's vote was a momentous one."

Still, the AP is not calling Harris the new presumptive nominee. That's because the convention delegates are still free to vote for the candidate of their choice at the convention in August or if Democrats go through with a virtual roll call ahead of that gathering in Chicago.

Harris, in a statement, responded to the AP tally, saying she is "grateful to President Biden and every-

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one in the Democratic Party who has already put their faith in me, and I look forward to taking our case directly to the American people.”

Worries over Biden’s fitness for office were replaced by fresh signs of unity after a seismic shift to the presidential contest that upended both major political parties’ carefully honed plans for the 2024 race.

Speaking to campaign staff in Wilmington, Delaware, Harris acknowledged the “rollercoaster” of the last several weeks, but expressed confidence in her new campaign team.

“It is my intention to go out and earn this nomination and to win,” she said. She promised to “unite our Democratic Party, to unite our nation, and to win this election.”

She quickly leaned into the themes that will be prominent in her campaign against Trump over the coming 100 days, contrasting her time as a prosecutor with Trump’s felony convictions — “I know Donald Trump’s type,” she said — and casting herself as a defender of economic opportunity and abortion access.

“Our fight for the future is also a fight for freedoms,” she said. “The baton is in our hands.”

The president called into the meeting from his home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, where he is recovering from COVID-19, to lend his support to Harris. He planned to talk about his decision to step aside in an address to the nation later this week.

“The name has changed at the top of the ticket, but the mission hasn’t changed at all,” Biden said in his first public remarks since announcing his decision to step aside, promising he was “not going anywhere” and plans to campaign on Harris’ behalf.

Biden said of his decision, “It was the right thing to do.”

As he handed off the mantle of leadership to Harris, Biden added: “I’m watching you kid. I love you.”

Harris was headed to the battleground state of Wisconsin on Tuesday as her campaign for the White House kicks into high gear. The event in Milwaukee will be her first full-fledged campaign event since announcing her candidacy.

The AP tally is based on interviews with individual delegates, public statements from state parties, many of which have announced that their delegations are supporting Harris en masse, and public statements and endorsements from individual delegates.

Locking up the nomination was only the first item on the staggering political to-do list for Harris after learning of Biden’s plans to leave the race Sunday morning on a call with the president. She must also pick a running mate and pivot a massive political operation that had been built to reelect Biden to boost her candidacy instead.

On Sunday afternoon, Biden’s campaign formally changed its name to Harris for President, reflecting that she is inheriting his political operation of more than 1,000 staffers and war chest that stood at nearly \$96 million at the end of June. She added \$81 million to that total in the first 24 hours after Biden’s endorsement, her campaign said — a presidential fundraising record — with contributions from more than 888,000 donors.

The campaign also saw a surge of interest after Harris took over, with more than 28,000 new volunteers registered since the announcement — a rate more than 100 times an average day from the previous Biden reelection campaign, underscoring the enthusiasm behind Harris.

Big-name Harris endorsements Monday, including from Govs. Wes Moore of Maryland, Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, J.B. Pritzker of Illinois and Andy Beshear of Kentucky, left a vanishing list of potential rivals.

House Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, who had been one of the notable holdouts, initially encouraging a primary to strengthen the eventual nominee, said she was lending her “enthusiastic support” to Harris’ effort to lead the party.

Harris, if elected, would be the first woman and first person of South Asian descent to be president.

The Democratic National Convention is scheduled to be held Aug. 19-22 in Chicago, but the party had announced before Biden dropped out that it would hold a virtual roll call to formally nominate Biden before in-person proceedings begin. The convention’s rules committee is scheduled to meet this week to finalize its nomination process with a virtual vote as soon as Aug. 1, the party announced on Monday, with the process completed by Aug. 7.

“We can and will be both fast and fair as we execute this nomination,” Jaime Harrison, the Democratic

National Committee's chair, said on a conference call with reporters.

The party said the virtual roll call would feature multiple rounds of voting on nominees if multiple candidates meet the qualification threshold. To qualify, candidates must have the electronic signatures of 300 convention delegates.

As doctors leave Puerto Rico in droves, a rapper tries to fill the gaps

By CORAL MURPHY MARCOS Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — On a recent morning in an Afro-Caribbean community in northeast Puerto Rico, Dr. Pedro Juan Vázquez went door-to-door as part of his medical rounds. He greeted the elderly residents the town with a cheerful "Good afternoon!" and a smile and casually asked if they'd like their vitals taken.

Many were surprised at being approached with an offer of medical care. A man in a gray tank top opened his screen door and said, "Of course," and took a seat on his porch to be checked out.

Though a physician, Vázquez is better known in Puerto Rico as a rapper who uses the stage name PJ Sin Suela.

The 34-year-old is trying to fulfill his passion for music while helping those in need — and raise awareness about a health crisis on the island of 3.2 million residents. The U.S. territory is facing power outages as well as a shortage of medical professionals, with many having fled to the U.S. mainland for better wages.

Puerto Rico lost over 8,600 doctors out of nearly 18,800 in just over a decade, according to a 2023 report by the think tank The Center for a New Economy. The problem is expected to grow more dire in coming years.

"We have a huge exodus of young people," Vázquez told The Associated Press. "In Puerto Rico, we have a crisis much bigger than people think."

He travels from San Juan, the capital, to the island's remote areas at least once a week to treat underserved communities struggling in the aftermath of hurricanes, earthquakes and a frail economy.

After hanging up his doctor's scrubs, Vázquez spends his time producing and performing music that grapples with issues like social inequality, poverty and gun violence, with many deaths in Puerto Rico caused by domestic violence and stray bullets hitting innocent victims.

"A bullet is flying, lost like a child ... the wind caresses it, seeks to make news, falling into a skull, without any kind of justice," he raps in "Las Balas Lloran" ("Bullets Cry").

In "Somos Más" ("We are More") he taps into the distressing economic conditions on the island, singing: "The debt has been placed before the worker, the one who goes outside under the rain and the sun, public servers, teachers and nurses."

His focus on social inequality resonates at home and with homesick Puerto Ricans abroad.

Vázquez comes from a background of leaving and returning to the island, a back-and-forth familiar to many Puerto Ricans since they hold U.S. passports. He doesn't criticize those who have left Puerto Rico for the U.S. mainland, though he has done the reverse.

"You can't judge anybody, everybody has their story," he said. "I'm blessed to have two careers that I can do and live off of."

He was born in the Bronx in New York City, but moved with his family to the southern town of Ponce, Puerto Rico. He later went to Pennsylvania, then returned to Bayamón, Puerto Rico, to study medicine, becoming a doctor in 2015.

Vázquez became a household name for a younger generation in Latin America in 2018 with the single "Cuál Es Tu Plan?" The song was a collaboration with Puerto Rican icon Bad Bunny and reggaeton singer Ñejo. The recognition he gained led to collaborations with Broadway star Lin-Manuel Miranda and René Pérez, known by the stage name Residente, the frontman of the former reggaeton duo Calle 13.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, he switched from holding a microphone to a stethoscope, working full-time at a hospital in Ponce for a year. As a general practitioner, he treated patients of all ages

excited to be cared for by the popular rapper.

Vázquez said some doctors at first doubted his qualifications after years of touring and rapping, despite him keeping up his medical qualifications.

"After a month, everybody knew that this wasn't a joke for me, and that I'm really good at what I do," he said. "I shut up whoever doubted me."

Dr. Carlos Díaz Vélez, president of Puerto Rico's Association of Surgical Doctors, said Vázquez has helped put a spotlight on Puerto Rico's health crisis.

"He's expressed his criticism about what's happening here because he himself knows what the problems are within the health system," Díaz said.

In 2023, Vázquez's work earned him a humanitarian award in the Premios Tu Música Urbano, an awards ceremony that recognizes urban music artists.

Milagros Martínez, a community leader in the western town of Hormigueros, recalls when Vázquez arrived in September 2022 after Hurricane Fiona to provide medical check-ups to families without power or water.

"The younger people recognized him," Martínez said. "But he knew how to separate his medical role from his role as an artist."

Since then Vázquez has been working on an album he hopes to release soon, reducing his shifts as a doctor from full time to once or twice a week in a mobile clinic with a nonprofit called Direct Relief.

Meanwhile, Vázquez faces a problem that plagues both his clinic and his recording studio: frequent power outages.

He's had to leave his studio several times because it has no generator, but what troubles him most are the outages that affect his patients.

In June, towns in central and southern parts of the island faced a prolonged power outage during extreme heat.

"You'll go and see people don't have power for two days, going through the heat we have, and we have a huge transportation problem that people don't talk about, where a lot of people can't reach hospitals," Vázquez said.

Now more than ever, he feels the need to juggle his passion to sing and care for others, something that's come easier with time.

When he needs an extra set of hands, he calls for volunteers to assist with mobile clinics in Puerto Rico, and his fans step up.

"They sign up to treat patients for free all day with me," he said. "I come out of (the clinic) crying sometimes."

Maduro seeks to shore up Venezuela military's support ahead of vote threatening his hold on power

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

AGUA CALIENTE, Venezuela (AP) — At a crossroads not far from a gas station overgrown with weeds, young men and women in faded green fatigues stop vehicles returning from a rally for opponents of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, ask passengers for their identifications, and inspect their cars, trucks and motorcycles.

Such checkpoints have proliferated across the country's vast tropical plains, forested highlands and beachfronts in the run-up to Sunday's presidential election, aiming to intimidate and occasionally detain government critics. They often involve a request for a ride, bananas or "collaboration" — Venezuela's euphemism for a small bribe.

But the power play frequently falls flat. When their superiors slip away from the scorching sun, the grunts betray their displeasure with Maduro and openness to a new commander in chief.

"Did the lady arrive? Were there a lot people?" one giddy soldier asks about opposition leader Maria Corina Machado.

"We wanted to watch, but there is no Wi-Fi here," whispers another.

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Since taking power in 2013, Maduro hasn't hesitated to deploy troops to crush protests while rewarding senior officers with lucrative government jobs and control of key industries. But days away from a hotly disputed vote that threatens Maduro's hold on power, the self-proclaimed socialist is working harder than ever to shore up the loyalty of the armed forces — the traditional arbiter of political disputes in Venezuela — and keep top commanders in line.

In recent days, the president has appeared on state TV attending a graduation ceremony for 25,000 police officers, praising them as the first line of defense against what he called attempts by rightwing hardliners to provoke a tragedy. He also promoted dozens of officers and bestowed a new title on his longtime defense minister, Vladimir Padrino López: "General of the Sovereign People."

"The destiny of Venezuela depends on our victory," Maduro said at a rally this month. "If we want to avoid a bloodbath, or a fratricidal civil war triggered by the fascists, then we must guarantee the biggest electoral victory ever."

The top brass has stood fast with Maduro, delving deep into political mudslinging instead of sticking to its traditional role safeguarding the vote.

Gen. Domingo Hernández Lárez, the head of the joint chiefs of staff, posted a photo on social media purportedly showing Machado speaking in front of a white board scribbled with notes calling for the "elimination" of the armed forces. Machado, who was banned from running and is backing stand-in candidate Edmundo Gonzalez, has called the accusation "fake news." A media watchdog group said the image was manipulated.

Maduro's opponents have long struggled to win over doubters in the military.

The armed forces have been an integral part of Maduro's grip on power ever since his mentor and predecessor, former tank commander Hugo Chávez, led an uprising against an unpopular austerity government in 1992. When Chavez was elected president in 1998, he purged officers indoctrinated in the U.S. to fight communism, placed fellow coup plotters in top positions and poured the country's oil wealth into fighter jets and expensive military hardware.

Maduro, without Chávez's military pedigree, has nonetheless empowered his own crop of uniformed allies, many of whom, like the president, face allegations of corruption and human rights abuses.

The National Guard has also quietly imported anti-riot gear and refurbished armored vehicles that could be used to quell protests, according to retired Gen. Rodolfo Camacho, a Maduro opponent who writes a report on military affairs.

Meanwhile, the government hasn't hesitated to punish soldiers who step out of line. Members of the armed forces make up about half of the 301 Maduro opponents currently imprisoned and classified as political prisoners by Caracas-based legal assistance cooperative Foro Penal.

The Defense Ministry did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

While nobody is predicting a barracks revolt, discontent among the rank and file is widespread, said William Brownfield, a former U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela and senior fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington.

As Venezuela's economy has gone off the rails — shrinking 71% between 2012 and 2020, while inflation topped 130,000% — the cash bonuses and perks awarded to military families have lost much of their luster. Desertion has increased among the roughly 150,000 members of the military, as many join the millions of Venezuelans fleeing the country rather than defend a government they no longer support.

"The conscripts, enlisted personnel, and low-ranking officers are not raking in the cash," said Brownfield. "Many probably have relatives who have fled Venezuela and they are susceptible to the opposition's message."

Gen. Manuel Cristopher Figuera, a former spy chief, said any movement to defy Maduro would come from the bottom up in the form of a refusal to repress protesters. Opposition leaders have vowed to "defend" their vote in the event of any tampering, and given the recent history of political bloodshed, many Venezuelans are bracing for demonstrations after the election.

"They aren't going to rebel, but they aren't going to obey orders either," said Figuera, who fled the country in 2019 after leading a failed attempt to remove Maduro.

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Some believe Maduro can't rely as confidently on his allies and see Padrino as a potential white knight. The 61-year-old is one of the last Venezuelan officers trained in the U.S. — he studied psychological operations at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia — before Chavez shifted Venezuela's alliances toward Russia, China and Iran.

In 2015, when the opposition swept parliamentary elections by a landslide, Padrino appeared on state TV flanked by his top command recognizing the results even before Maduro acknowledged defeat.

And Venezuela's top brass has turned on a dime before, most remarkably in 1958, when it ousted President Marcos Perez Jimenez after being complicit in his dictatorship for years.

"If there's an avalanche of people in the streets supporting the opposition, there's going to be a lot of pressure on Padrino," said Camacho, who worked alongside the defense minister before being charged with plotting against Maduro's government and fleeing Venezuela. "He is the one small hope I have left."

Data shows hurricanes and earthquakes grab headlines but inland counties top disaster list

BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Floyd County keeps flooding and the federal government keeps coming to the rescue.

In July 2022, at least 40 people died and 300 homes were damaged when the eastern Kentucky county flooded. It was the 13th time in 12 years that the rural county was declared a federal disaster. These are disasters so costly that local governments feel they can't pay for it all, so the governor asks the president to declare a disaster freeing up federal funds.

"After that flood I had 500 homeless people looking at me, 'Judge what are we going to do?'" recalled Judge Robbie Williams, administrator for the county of a bit more than 35,000 people. "It's overwhelming and it's just a matter of time before it happens again."

It did. In 2023, Floyd County was declared a disaster again for 14th time, starting in 2011. And Floyd County isn't even the nation's most disaster-prone county. Neighboring Johnson County has 15 disasters declared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency since 2011.

When it comes to extreme weather and other so-called natural disasters, people generally look to the hurricane or earthquake-prone coasts and say that's where the danger is. But that's not where the highest concentration of federally declared disasters are, according to an atlas of 713 FEMA declared disasters created by New York University's Institute for Public Knowledge. While most people in disasters think about federal government direct financial help to individual victims to pay for lost housing and businesses, the atlas focuses on the \$60 billion pot of FEMA aid to governments.

Eight of the nine counties with the most federal declared disasters since 2011 — more than a dozen each — are in Kentucky, with the one in Vermont. These counties have four to five times the number of disaster as the national average of three in the past 13 years.

"California and Louisiana and I would say now even Texas, Florida, for sure, they soak up all the oxygen when you hear about these giant storms," said atlas creator Amy Chester, director of the disaster prevention-focused Rebuild By Design nonprofit group. "But what you're not hearing about are these storms that are happening all the time, and that's just becoming like, regular to places like Vermont." Chester also mentioned Tennessee, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Iowa and Alaska as hotspots.

"We want to show that climate change is already here," Chester said of the data covers 2011 to 2023, but doesn't include heat waves, drought or COVID. "Communities are suffering all over."

Before she crunched the data, Chester said she figured Vermont would be a haven from climate change. Cooler. Inland. Instead it's a disaster hot spot.

"It's awful" Chester said. "It just keeps happening to them."

Days after she said that Vermont flooded again, this time from the remnants of Hurricane Beryl.

Flooding is the most common disaster in the United States, according to FEMA. Since 2011, FEMA handed out more than \$41 billion in aid following hurricanes, the most of any disaster type.

"What the data tell us is that the frequency and severity of disasters at local-state scales is increasing

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with rural, suburban, and urban places being affected nationwide," Susan Cutter, co-director of the Hazards Vulnerability and Resilience Institute at the University of South Carolina, said in an email. She wasn't part of Chester's research. "More needs to be done to enhance resilience to reduce their impacts on people."

The largest county in the nation that has not had a federally declared disaster since 2011 is Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, where the city of Charlotte is.

"We've been blessed," said Charlotte emergency management chief Robert Graham, who attributes the lack of federal disasters to good luck, good government and good geography.

"We are protected from the coast somewhat," Graham said of the inland county. "We don't get all the impacts from the mountains. Charlotte seems to be in a, somewhat of a sweet spot."

Graham said a cushy reserve fund and planning have prevented the city from having to go to the federal government for financial help after disasters like a 2019 flood. But he said he knows it's only a matter of time before the city's luck runs out.

Luck long abandoned eastern Kentucky.

In Floyd County, geography and government regulations make it tough, Williams said. The mountain-heavy county has people living in the narrow valley floor in old coal camps, he said. And when it rains, the ever-shallower creeks overflows.

"We're seeing historic levels of flooding," Williams said. "It's only getting worse."

Environmental regulations won't let local officials dredge the creeks, which keep getting built up with silt coming down the mountains, often from development, Williams said. Some creeks decades ago were 20 feet deep but are now shallow enough to walk across, he said.

The problem is there is nowhere for the rain to go," Williams said.

National Weather Service data shows that Floyd County now averages more than 50 inches of rain a year, up from 42 to 43 inches a year in the mid 1980s. Warmer air holds more moisture, with studies and statistics showing the Eastern United States is not only getting more rain, but more intense downpours that cause floods.

Floyd County's government received more than \$35 million in FEMA disaster aid since 2011. That's not even near the top, where the big money went to places devastated by hurricanes.

Five counties — three of them in New York — received more than \$1 billion in FEMA aid, led by Manhattan's New York County, which got \$8.9 billion, nearly all of it due to 2012's Hurricane Sandy. All of the top five counties were struck by one or more hurricanes.

Chester's group decided to look at congressional districts and how they compared in disasters, especially with a nearly evenly split House of Representatives.

Nearly 60 counties have had at least 10 federally declared disasters since 2011 and nearly 70% of them are represented in Congress by Republicans. About 280 counties have had no disasters in that time periods and 87% of them are represented by Democrats, according to the NYU data.

Chester noted that Republicans aren't talking about climate change on the campaign trail, but said "research shows that extreme weather is not a partisan issue."

More important is how state and local policies create or minimize risk for future disasters, said Samantha Montano, a professor of emergency management at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. And in Floyd County the government using FEMA money is buying the homes of 150 residents to move them out of harm's way, but some don't want to leave, Williams said.

"Until we get those homes out of these flood ways... we're still going to have these issues," Williams said.

Netanyahu is in Washington at a fraught time for Israel and the US. What to know about his visit

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, ASHRAF KHALIL and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington this week is looming as a fraught one between the two allies, coming at a moment of extreme political flux in the United

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States, and wariness among American leaders about Netanyahu's history of interjecting himself into U.S. domestic politics.

The main purpose of Netanyahu's visit is a speech to a joint meeting of Congress. But at stake, in meetings with administration officials, are hopes for progress in U.S.-led efforts to mediate an end to the nine-month Israel-Hamas war. The visit comes as the toll of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza nears 40,000. It's also in a week when new deaths were reported among the surviving hostages — who include Israelis, Americans and other nationalities — held by Hamas and other militants since the first hours of the war.

Netanyahu planned his trip weeks before the ground abruptly started heaving under U.S. politics this summer. That includes a July 13 assassination attempt against Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, and President Joe Biden's decision Sunday to give up his faltering reelection campaign and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris for the presidency instead.

Protests are planned for Netanyahu's planned speech to both houses of Congress on Wednesday.

A look at the visit:

Why Netanyahu is coming

The political aspect for Netanyahu is that his popularity has plummeted at home, and the visit — at least originally — was seen as giving him a chance to show himself as a global statesman, welcomed by the lawmakers and leaders of Israel's closest ally and the world's only superpower.

House Speaker Mike Johnson helped bring about Netanyahu's address to lawmakers, highlighting firm Republican support for the Israeli leader. Netanyahu has had tense relations with Biden despite the administration's military and diplomatic support for Israel's war.

Biden and Netanyahu are expected to meet Thursday, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity ahead of the White House announcement. Harris will meet with Netanyahu separately. It was still uncertain Monday if he would meet with Trump.

Speaking for the White House side of things, national security adviser Jake Sullivan said at a security conference in Colorado last week that Biden planned to focus on working out what it will take for the United States, Israel and others to get a hostage-release and cease-fire deal done in the coming weeks.

Biden called in to a meeting of campaign staffers Monday, telling them, "I think we're on the verge" of ending the war.

For his part, Netanyahu pointed to longer-term issues before flying out of Israel Monday. He said he wanted to talk to Biden about continuing the war against Hamas, and confronting other Iran-backed armed groups in the region, as well as freeing hostages.

Why Netanyahu's visit is controversial

Israel's war has been intensely divisive in the United States, spurring protests and resulting in arrests on college campuses, alienating some voters on both sides of the issue, and frustrating months of effort by Biden to bring the fighting to a close.

The trip is the first time Netanyahu has traveled abroad since the war broke out Oct. 7. It's also his first since the International Criminal Court said it was seeking his arrest in what it said were possible war crimes in Israel's offensive in Gaza. Israel denies wrongdoing, and the U.S. does not recognize the ICC.

Netanyahu faces complaints in Israel that he is avoiding closing a cease-fire and hostage-release deal so as to stay in power, a charge repeated Monday by a relative of one hostage.

Netanyahu also has not been shy about criticizing Democratic administrations, including Biden's. In 2015, the Israeli leader used a speech to both houses of Congress to try to torpedo lawmaker and popular support for President Barack Obama's nuclear deal with Iran. He condemned it as a bad and dangerous deal, angering administration officials.

Sullivan said administration officials don't expect this week to be a repeat of 2015.

Netanyahu's timing

It appears bad. Even as Netanyahu was headed for Washington on Monday, American politics and voters were still adjusting to the abrupt shift of focus from Biden to Harris in the Democratic presidential race. Biden was still in Delaware getting over COVID-19.

Harris, meanwhile, is due to be away Wednesday, on an Indianapolis trip scheduled before she became

the leading Democratic presidential candidate over the weekend.

Biden plans to meet with Netanyahu this week, according to a person familiar with his schedule who was not authorized to comment publicly. The exact timing is still unclear. Harris also plans to meet with Netanyahu this week, according to the White House.

Israeli media reported Netanyahu had also asked for a meeting with Trump, but there was no immediate word of one. Trump has had a mixed relationship with Netanyahu, including cursing him for what Trump portrayed as Netanyahu's quick recognition of Biden's victory in the 2020 elections.

Protests are planned

Netanyahu's joint address to Congress will look a bit different from previous such addresses, in part due to opposition among Democrats to his conduct of the war in Gaza.

Harris, as Senate president, normally sits behind the foreign leaders, but she'll be away. Senate Pro Tempore Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat, is next in line to fill that seat, but said she was among the lawmakers declining to attend. Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Ben Cardin will sit there instead. He told The Associated Press he hoped Netanyahu would use the speech to lay out a future for both Israelis and Palestinians.

While families of some hostages were reported to be traveling with Netanyahu, other relatives who fault his handling of the crisis said they would also be sitting in the chamber.

Some lawmakers who planned to boycott the address said they would spend the time talking with the families of those held by Hamas.

Multiple protests are planned outside the Capitol, with some condemning the Israeli military campaign overall, and others expressing support for Israel but pressing Netanyahu to strike a cease-fire deal and bring home hostages.

The largest protest is set for Wednesday morning, with organizers planning to march around the Capitol building demanding Netanyahu's arrest on war crimes charges. A permit application submitted to the National Park Service estimated at least 5,000 participants.

Smaller protests are planned Tuesday evening and throughout the day Wednesday, including a prayer vigil outside Union Station near the Capitol. Relatives of Israeli hostages are planning a vigil on the National Mall.

Security is tight

Fencing was up around the hotel along the Potomac River where Netanyahu is staying and uniformed security were screening workers and others at the hotel complex. It's part of rigid security in Washington for the Israeli leader's visit.

The Metropolitan Police Department has announced an extended series of street closures that will last most of the week.

The visit will serve as a high-profile test for the Secret Service, which handles protection of visiting foreign leaders. That's as the agency's chief was being grilled by lawmakers Monday over what she acknowledged were serious security failures in the attack on Trump earlier.

Biden aims for more achievements despite the bane of lame-duck presidents: diminished relevance

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del. (AP) — President Joe Biden says he's "determined to get as much done" as he possibly can in his final six months in the White House as he tries to beat back a defining force that his lame-duck predecessors struggled to vanquish: diminished relevance.

Biden hopes to keep the spigot flowing with hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding from a series of major legislative wins early in his term — signature policy victories that could be undone should Republican Donald Trump return to the White House.

He also badly wants Israel and Hamas to agree to his proposed three-phase cease-fire deal to bring home remaining Israeli hostages and potentially pave the way for an end to the nine-month-old war in

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Gaza. That would require no small measure of risk by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leadership.

Biden also will press to quickly fill federal judiciary vacancies — currently there are 48 openings — and make other federal agency appointments, but he will undoubtedly face pushback from Senate Republicans who want to keep Biden from notching any end-of-term wins.

Biden, in short, is rallying his team to help him defy political gravity.

"I'm still going to be fully fully engaged," a gravelly voiced Biden, who is recovering from COVID-19 at his beach home in Delaware, promised staffers during a Monday call-in to his former campaign headquarters.

At the White House, staff are waiting for Biden's expected return on Tuesday after he spent the last six days convalescing.

White House chief of staff Jeff Zients on Monday urged aides to keep their heads down and remain focused on the work that remains. He listed lowering housing and health care costs, implementing the administration's key legislative achievements, and safeguarding democracy as among Biden's top priorities for the final months of the administration.

The message is being echoed throughout the administration. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told senior State Department officials that Biden wants his team to remain laser focused on carrying out his foreign policy agenda. Blinken noted that there is still "one-eighth" of Biden's term to go, according to State Department spokesman Matthew Miller.

Biden, who is scheduled to meet with Israel's Netanyahu later this week, said during his call to campaign staff that he was focused on getting a cease-fire agreement and expressed optimism that a deal was close. His standing with some in his liberal base has plummeted as the death toll in Gaza has mounted. More than 39,000 people have died, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

"I'll be working really closely with the Israelis and with the Palestinians to try to work out how we can get the Gaza war to end and Middle East peace and get all those hostages home," Biden told campaign staff. "I think we're on the verge of being able to do that."

Aaron David Miller, a former U.S. Middle East peace negotiator, said that a cease-fire deal appears closer than it has been through the conflict.

Netanyahu has faced pressure from the far-right members of his coalition to resist any deal that stops Israel from eliminating Hamas in Gaza. But the Israeli prime minister may have some wiggle room when the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, begins a three-month recess July 28. Far-right members of his coalition would be unable to hold a no-confidence vote during that period.

Biden's leverage on Netanyahu, who is set to address Congress on Wednesday as part of his Washington visit, remains limited. And ramping up rhetorical pressure on Netanyahu, who wants to demonstrate to an Israeli audience that he remains popular on Capitol Hill and can withstand any pressure from the White House, is perilous, Miller said.

"You might get a cease-fire no matter what Biden does or doesn't do," added Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Biden and Kamala Harris have to be careful with respect to how Republicans may interpret, exploit and use anything that is seen as pressure on Israel."

Lame-duck presidents have used the waning days of their presidencies to take big shots at weighty policy. In 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law a \$700 billion bailout of the financial services industry weeks before Barack Obama defeated Republican John McCain. Bush also signed off on more than \$17 billion to keep America's auto industry afloat in the final weeks of his presidency as the economy tanked.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton launched negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat at Camp David, Maryland, in one last — and ultimately unsuccessful — effort at winning Middle East peace at the end of his presidency.

President Lyndon B. Johnson's efforts to end the war in Vietnam in the final months of his presidency flamed out in 1968. Historians have pointed to evidence that Democrat Johnson's successor, Republican Richard Nixon, covertly sought to slow the effort out of fear that an agreement could hurt his election chances.

The foreign policy space — particularly helping seal an Israel-Hamas cease-fire agreement — might be Biden's best hope for a final legacy-defining moment.

"Between Ukraine and Gaza, the Biden national security team has been stretched. They have more than enough on their plate," said Gordon Gray, a former U.S. ambassador to Tunisia who is now a professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University. "Realistically, there might not be enough time for big breakthroughs."

William Howell, a political scientist at the University of Chicago, said lame-duck status does inevitably constrain a presidency but it doesn't necessarily have to make one inert.

Howell said that Biden, who has vowed to help propel Harris' White House bid, may be able to turn himself into a juggernaut on the campaign trail now that he's acceded to pressure from the deep-pocketed donors who threatened to withhold cash if he didn't exit the campaign.

"His most important job over the new few months is setting the conditions to make Kamala Harris successful," Howell said.

Thousands of migrant kids have reached the Canary Islands alone. Local officials want Spain's help

By RENATA BRITO Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — The children sometimes won't stop crying. Health workers dealing with migrants arriving on Spain's Canary Islands try to understand if the tears are from illness, injury or, as is often the case, from pure shock.

One young Senegalese boy who disembarked recently kept fainting every few minutes, troubling doctors who couldn't determine the cause. Other migrants finally explained: the boy had witnessed both parents die during the arduous boat voyage from West Africa. Their bodies were thrown overboard into the Atlantic Ocean.

"There's no medicine for that," said Inmaculada Mora Peces, a 54-year-old emergency doctor who treats migrants arriving on the island of El Hierro.

Mora Peces is among a growing number of people sounding the alarm as the archipelago struggles to deal with thousands of teenagers and children traveling alone to the European Union territory from Senegal, Mali, and other African nations, fleeing poverty, conflict and instability.

On Tuesday, Spain's parliament will vote to consider a legislative proposal that would force other regions to take responsibility for some of the minors currently stuck on the Canaries in dire conditions.

The bill has sparked a national political crisis and there is no guarantee it will pass.

The conservative Popular Party, the leading opposition to Spain's left-wing national government, is torn. On the one hand, it is the junior member of the Canary Islands government and is being urged by its senior partner, the Canary Coalition party, to support the deal. On the other hand, the far-right Vox party, which rails against irregular migration and particularly unaccompanied minors, is threatening to withdraw from its coalition governments in other regions if the Popular Party accepts any deal to relocate underage migrants, even voluntarily.

Under Spanish law, the regional authorities where the children arrive are responsible for their guardianship. But the Canary Islands government says it is overwhelmed, with more than 5,500 minors — far above its capacity for 2,000.

"It's a humanitarian catastrophe," said Francisco Candil, a regional government official in charge of social welfare.

Not only do the Canary Islands lack physical space, but the regional government is struggling to hire professionals trained to work with the young migrants on the islands located some 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) from mainland Spain.

As a result, the children and teenagers languishing on the islands are not receiving the protections they are entitled to under Spanish and European law, including education and healthcare. Spanish media have reported overcrowded centers as well as cases of abuse and mistreatment. On the island of Lanzarote,

authorities have set up temporary tents to accommodate the new arrivals.

Candil warned that the situation is only expected to deteriorate as boats keep sailing from the coasts of Senegal, Mauritania and the Western Sahara to the Spanish islands just 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Africa's western coast.

Nearly 20,000 men, women and children have reached the Canaries so far this year, a 160% increase from 2023. And that's even before the high season for migrant crossings begins in the fall, Candil added.

Earlier this year, the EU signed a 210 million euro deal with Mauritania to stop smugglers from launching boats for Spain. But the deal has had little effect on migrant arrivals for now.

If the bill doesn't pass for consideration in the Spanish parliament on Tuesday, "it would be a failure for Spain and Europe," Candil said. With a population of 48 million people, it shouldn't be difficult for regions in mainland Spain to cope with a few hundred children, he argued. The Canary Islands would still care for the majority of unaccompanied minors.

Spain's Ombudsman Ángel Gabilondo called Friday for urgent structural and legal reforms after visiting two shelters for underage migrants in Tenerife.

"It's enough to go to a center to see the youth and feel their pain," Gabilondo said. "They have been in the centers for months and see no future. We are talking about human beings, not goods."

Meanwhile, professionals like Mora Peces say they feel helpless in the face of so many children and teenagers who arrive in terrible conditions after the dangerous ocean voyage.

"Today I arrived at my shift and my colleagues were crying. Well, I started working and in the end I ended up crying too," Mora Peces wrote on X last week, a tweet that has already gotten over 864,000 views.

Last week doctors tried to save a 2-year-old girl who arrived on a boat from Senegal with her 8-year-old brother and mother. The girl got separated from her family and died despite attempts to save her.

Mora Peces had to deliver the tragic news to her mother. The mother asked for a photo of her daughter's body which Mora Peces asked the funeral home to send.

While the vast majority of unaccompanied minors arriving are teenage boys, Candil and others say they are concerned by the increasing number of young children, particularly young girls, traveling alone — nearly 200 in the last eight months. "It's highly unusual," Candil said.

The girls flee forced marriages, abusive relationships, persecution or simply seek a better life, explained Siham Khalifa El Abdi, of the SAMU foundation which runs shelters specifically for unaccompanied girls.

Among those under SAMU's care is a teenager who fled Mali due to her sexual orientation. During her five-month migration journey to Spain, she was assaulted and forced to have sex with older men in exchange for food.

"These girls are very damaged," said Khalifa El Abdi.

Mora Peces, the doctor working in El Hierro, says she's horrified by the rhetoric used by some politicians in Madrid to discuss the issue, including the Popular Party and Vox who have called for the Spanish army and navy to be deployed to stop the migrant boats.

She hears politicians and even regular people calling migrants "rapists" and "criminals," a view that she describes as being completely at odds with the reality of the "tiny people in dramatic situations" that she treats.

"What they are discussing at the parliamentary level, it seems like they are not children," she said. "As if they weren't people."

Israeli government quietly sends millions to unauthorized West Bank settler outposts

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli government has budgeted millions of dollars to protect small, unauthorized Jewish farms in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, underwriting tiny outposts meant to grow into full-fledged settlements, according to an anti-settlement monitoring group.

Documents uncovered by Peace Now illustrate how Israel's pro-settler government has quietly poured

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money into the unauthorized outposts, which are separate from its more than 100 officially recognized settlements. Some of those outposts have been linked to settler violence against Palestinians and are sanctioned by the U.S.

Palestinians and the international community say all settlements are illegal or illegitimate and undermine hopes for a two-state solution.

The Ministry of Settlements and National Mission, which is headed by a far-right settler leader, confirmed it budgeted 75 million shekels (\$20.5 million) last year for security equipment for “young settlements” — the term it uses for unauthorized Jewish farms and outposts in the West Bank. The money was quietly authorized in December while the country’s attention was focused on the war against Hamas in Gaza.

Peace Now said the funds have been used for vehicles, drones, cameras, generators, electric gates, fences and new roads that reach some of the more remote farms.

The group estimates approximately 500 people live on the small, unauthorized farms and 25,000 more live in larger outposts. Those outposts, while not officially authorized by the government, often receive tacit support before they are retroactively legalized.

Hagit Ofran, director of Peace Now’s “settlement watch” program, said the funding was the first time the Israeli government has channeled money to the outposts so openly.

Rights groups say the expanding network of remote farms atop West Bank hilltops are the primary drivers of violence and displacement of Palestinians.

In the last month alone, Israel’s government has legalized five formerly unauthorized settlements and made the largest land grab in the West Bank in three decades, declaring a wide swath of the territory state land in preparation for new construction.

Palestinians say violence by people associated with these farms has soared since Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack, which sparked Israel’s war against the militant group in the Gaza Strip.

On Friday, the top United Nations court said Israel’s presence in the Palestinian territories is unlawful and called for an immediate halt to settlement construction. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu quickly denounced the nonbinding opinion, saying the territories are part of the Jewish people’s historic homeland.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza — areas claimed by the Palestinians for a future state — in the 1967 Mideast war. It has settled over 500,000 Jews in the West Bank, most of whom live on authorized settlements, in addition to over 200,000 others in contested east Jerusalem, which it claims as part of its capital.

Netanyahu’s far-right government is dominated by West Bank settlers and pro-settler politicians. Netanyahu has placed his finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, in a new position inside the Defense Ministry overseeing settlement construction and development.

The United States, Britain, and the European Union have imposed international sanctions on 13 hard-line Israeli settlers, some of whom are associated with the outpost farms — as well as two affiliated outposts and four groups — over accusations of attacks and harassment against Palestinians. The measures are meant as a deterrent, and they expose people to asset freezes and travel and visa bans, though the freezes have been less effective.

The office of Orit Strock, the Minister of Settlements and National Mission, said the funds were coordinated with the Defense Ministry and “carried out in accordance with all laws.” It added that Strock, herself a longtime settler leader, “sees great importance in strengthening settlements” despite international condemnation.

The budget was approved in December and predates the sanctions. The government did not publish a list of the farms and outposts that received funding, so it’s unclear if the sanctioned farms and outposts are among them. But it’s likely that at least some of them are since the budget supported 68 of the nearly 70 farms identified by Peace Now, Ofran said. The number of farms has since grown to more than 90.

Peace Now said it learned of the funding decision from recordings and presentations shared at a conference of the pro-settler Religious Zionism Party last month at the “Shaharit Farm” outpost in the northern West Bank. Strock and Smotrich were in attendance.

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U.S. officials including President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have repeatedly raised concerns about the surge in settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. Israel's former top general in the West Bank raised similar concerns in a recent retirement speech.

Israel has said it is taking action against such attacks and argues that the sanctions are unnecessary.

Biden passed that torch slowly, hanging on until the wheels finally came off

By CALVIN WOODWARD, MARY CLARE JALONICK, STEPHEN GROVES and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — As the formulaic “pass the torch” drumbeat thumped on from lawmakers wanting him to quit the race, President Joe Biden maintained a brave face. Publicly, he vowed he was all in, until the day he got out.

But there were telling indications he was listening to that beat long before he ended his campaign for reelection. One sign was over a week ago, when Chuck Schumer visited his Delaware beach house as an emissary of gloom.

The Senate majority leader had spoken with Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi and the House Democratic leader, Hakeem Jeffries, a few days earlier. He had heard from nearly every Democratic senator, ping-pong him over the last three weeks on his old-school flip phone.

He wasn't speaking for all of them, but for many.

Think about what's bound to happen to Democrats in Congress, Schumer implored the president. Think about the generations-long impact of a Supreme Court with Donald Trump in the White House. Think about your legacy.

“I need a week,” Biden said. The two men hugged.

That scene and those words were described by someone familiar with the conversation, who would only detail it on condition of anonymity. Other firsthand observers of Biden's struggle to stay viable also described a privately contemplative president during his days of decision.

Some spoke on the record; others anonymously. Together, their accounts show a president who was determined to exhaust every avenue to keep his hopes alive, but ultimately not in denial about the prospects.

By the weekend, if not sooner, the gravity of it all reached a critical mass — the terrible polls, the precipitous drop in big-money donations, the sad voices of those he most respected and had worked with for decades.

One insider said Biden “began to come to a decision on Saturday evening,” in the company of four close advisers. Things moved quickly Sunday. Biden gave South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn early word he would be stepping aside, in what the congressman called a “very pleasant conversation.” He did not speak with Pelosi at the time.

In a hooded Howard University sweatshirt, workout sweats and sneakers, Vice President Kamala Harris held several conversations with Biden and as the day wore on, spent over 10 hours on the phone with more than 100 politicians and some activists. She knew she would get the huge boost of Biden's endorsement, yet needed to be seen as earning the nomination in her own right.

At 1:45 p.m., after separate calls to Harris, chief of staff Jeff Zients and campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon, he was connected on the phone with a small group of other advisers.

One minute later, with the release of his letter on X, the world knew.

Democrats saw trouble from the first moment of the debate

Democrats blanched in the first seconds of the June 27 debate with Trump. Low energy, hoarse, sometimes inaudible, Biden did not meet the moment as more than 50 million people watched.

He spoke of “making sure that we're able to make every single solitary person eligible for what I've been able to do with the COVID. Excuse me ... we finally beat Medicare.” It emerged later that he meant to claim that he had beaten the pharmaceutical industry, but many such points were lost in the fog.

Some outliers were already left thinking the unthinkable — Biden had to go. But it was still possible for many to believe Biden merely had a “bad night,” but only if he still could have the benefit of the doubt.

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More fumbles over the following days all fed into the public's suspicion, simmering over several years, that Biden was not fit for another term. The loyalist insiders kept insisting Biden was on his game. The vast nation of non-political outsiders saw through the pretense.

But as questions about Biden's acuity rolled into the first weekend after the debate, most lawmakers' phones — including those of the top rungs of congressional leadership — remained silent from the one person who could quell the unease: the president himself.

Even midway through the next week, Biden had not spoken with leading lawmakers, spreading frustration and panic through party ranks as many tried to relax at home and prepare for Independence Day celebrations.

Two days before the Fourth of July, Texas Democrat Rep. Lloyd Doggett, 77, became the first Democrat to call for Biden to withdraw from the race. A long-serving, but low-key member, Doggett did not prompt a mass move from the Democratic caucus, but it was also a telltale sign of the rippling crisis.

Pelosi, the former speaker, and Clyburn began openly airing their concerns about Biden's condition, creating a permission structure for others to do the same. Early on, Pelosi said it was legitimate for Democrats to ask whether Biden's night was a mere episode or a sign of a condition.

Soon, the list of lawmakers saying Biden should withdraw — or at least saying he had no chance of coming back against Trump — was growing.

They were playing a risky game with their careers — the party brass on one side, constituents on the other. No one wanted to cross the hunkered-down Biden campaign, but fears were rampant that the president's continued candidacy would take down Democrats across the landscape in November.

Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet vocalized those fears when other senators still wouldn't. "Donald Trump is on track, I think, to win this election and maybe win it by a landslide and take with him the Senate and the House," said Bennet.

The Biden-must-go contingent, though hugely outnumbered by fence-sitters and Biden loyalists, was not to be swayed easily. On several occasions, when the president made a good speech or showed sharpness off script, the list only grew.

Four jumped on the list the day after Trump's speech to the convention and more followed. If some Democrats thought Trump's ultimately divisive and rambling convention remarks could swing the pendulum back to Biden, other Democrats did not agree.

In similar fashion earlier, Biden displayed a mastery of policy, despite some gaffes, in an hourlong news conference following a NATO summit in Washington, prompting some loyalists to say, in effect — See? He's fine. Immediately afterward, Connecticut Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, posted on X that Biden should end his campaign. Several others did as well.

There was a sameness to these appeals from lawmakers as the list grew to over three dozen: Praise Biden's legacy, invoke the torch.

But some stood out. Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, in *The Boston Globe*, recalled breakfasts with Biden when he was vice president, a rally Biden staged for him after his tough primary win in 2014 and the many times, as recently as this past Christmas Ball, when he caught the president's eye and Biden "would break into that big, wide Joe Biden grin and say how glad he was to see me."

They saw each other again, in France in early June at a D-Day commemoration. "For the first time, he didn't seem to recognize me," Moulton wrote. "Of course, that can happen as anyone ages, but as I watched the disastrous debate a few weeks ago, I have to admit that what I saw in Normandy was part of a deeper problem."

Working private channels to ease an exit

With growing anxiety among his members in the two weeks after the debate, Schumer was talking to top White House aides Steve Ricchetti and Zients almost daily. Internally, Schumer urged senators not to speak out publicly and embarrass the president, believing instead that appealing to Biden's legacy and looking at poll numbers were the best approach.

Schumer eventually told Zients and Ricchetti that he wanted top Biden advisers to hear from caucus members themselves and invited them to a meeting July 11 before they all left town.

Aides Mike Donilon, Ricchetti and O'Malley Dillon came to the meeting with senators, held off campus, and it did not go well. Almost none expressed confidence in the president. But even afterwards, Schumer was worried that the heavy concerns were not getting through to Biden.

Following the meeting, Schumer called Jeffries, Pelosi and Obama. He decided that day that he needed to see Biden.

They met that Saturday in Rehoboth, hours before the assassination attempt on Trump. Schumer told Biden he came out of love and affection, then gave him his bleak prognosis. Biden took the week he said he needed.

Biden's fighting mode finally waned

On the fateful Sunday, the Biden campaign was still pitching the line that their guy was full-on in. Aides pointed to a letter by Democratic Party chairs in seven swing states that urged Democrats to unite around Biden.

"We understand the anxiety," said the chairs from Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada. "But the best antidote to political anxiety is taking action. You can't wring your hands when you're rolling up your sleeves."

On the Sunday news shows, Sen. Joe Manchin the independent West Virginia senator who caucuses with Democrats, weighed in.

On CNN: "I came to the decision with a heavy heart that I think it's time to pass the torch to a new generation."

On ABC: "I come with a heavy heart to think the time has come for him to pass the torch to a new generation."

On CBS, Biden campaign co-chair Cedric Richmond said flatly of the president: "He's going to be the candidate."

"He's in a fighting mode," Richmond added, "and I'm with him, and I'm gonna be with him until the wheels fall off."

Which the wheels did.

Bodycam video reveals chaotic scene of deputy fatally shooting Sonya Massey, who called 911 for help

By JOHN O'CONNOR Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Sonya Massey ducked and apologized to an Illinois sheriff's deputy seconds before he shot the Black woman three times in her home, with one fatal blow to the head, as seen in body camera video released Monday.

An Illinois grand jury indicted former Sangamon County Sheriff's Deputy Sean Grayson, 30, who is white, last week. He has pleaded not guilty to charges of first-degree murder, aggravated battery with a firearm and official misconduct.

The video confirmed prosecutors' earlier account of the tense moment when Grayson yelled from across a counter at Massey to set down a pot of hot water. He then threatened to shoot her, Massey ducked, briefly rose, and Grayson fired his pistol at her.

Authorities said Massey, 36, had called 911 earlier to report a suspected prowler. The video shows the two deputies responded just before 1 a.m. on July 6 at her home in Springfield, 200 miles (322 kilometers) southwest of Chicago. They first walked around the house and found a black SUV with broken windows in the driveway.

It took Massey three minutes to open the door after the deputies knocked, and she immediately said, "Don't hurt me."

She seemed confused as they spoke at the door, and she repeated that she needed help, referenced God and told them she didn't know who owned the car.

Inside the house, deputies seemed exasperated as she sat on her couch and went through her purse

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as they asked for identification to complete a report before leaving. Then Grayson pointed out a pot sitting on a flame on the stove.

"We don't need a fire while we're here," he said.

Massey immediately got up and went to the stove, moving the pot near a sink. She and Grayson seemed to share a laugh over her pan of "steaming hot water" before she unexpectedly said, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus."

"You better (expletive) not or I swear to God I'll (expletive) shoot you in your (expletive) face." He then pulled his 9mm pistol and demanded she drop the pot.

Massey said, "OK, I'm sorry." In Grayson's body camera footage, he pointed his weapon at her. She ducked and raised her hands.

Grayson was still in the living room, facing Massey and separated by a counter dividing the living room and kitchen. Prosecutors have said the separation allowed Grayson both "distance and relative cover" from Massey and the pot of hot water.

After Grayson shot her, Grayson discouraged his partner from grabbing a medical kit to save her.

"You can go get it, but that's a headshot," he said. "There's nothing you can do, man."

He added: "What else do we do? I'm not taking hot (expletive) boiling water to the (expletive) face"

Noting that Massey was still breathing, he relented and said he would get his kit, too. The other deputy said, "We can at least try to stop the bleeding."

Grayson told responding police, "She had boiling water and came at me, with boiling water. She said she was going to rebuke me in the name of Jesus and came at me with boiling water."

During a Monday afternoon news conference, the family's lawyer, civil rights attorney Ben Crump, called Grayson's "revisionist" justification "disingenuous."

"She needed a helping hand. She did not need a bullet to her face," Crump said of Massey.

Asked why Massey told Grayson, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus," Crump said she had undergone treatment for mental health issues. He noted that she invoked God's name from the beginning of the encounter and asked for her Bible after the deputies stepped inside.

During Massey's funeral on Friday, Crump said the video, which he and the family had already viewed, would "shock the conscience of America."

Massey's father, James Wilburn, demanded the county court system be completely open with its investigation and prosecution and transparent with the public.

"The only time I will see my baby again is when I leave this world," Wilburn said. "And I don't ever want anybody else in the United States to join this league."

Grayson, who was fired last week, is being held in the Sangamon County Jail without bond. If convicted, he faces prison sentences of 45 years to life for murder, 6 to 30 years for battery and 2 to 5 years for misconduct.

His lawyer, Daniel Fultz, declined to comment Monday.

In a statement, President Joe Biden said he and first lady Jill Biden were praying for Massey's family "as they face this unthinkable and senseless loss."

"When we call for help, all of us as Americans – regardless of who we are or where we live – should be able to do so without fearing for our lives," Biden said. "Sonya's death at the hands of a responding officer reminds us that all too often Black Americans face fears for their safety in ways many of the rest of us do not."

Massey's death is the latest example of Black people killed in recent years by police in their homes.

In May, a Hispanic Florida sheriff's deputy shot and killed Roger Fortson, when the Air Force senior airman opened the door of his home in Fort Walton Beach armed with a handgun pointed down. The deputy, Eddie Duran, was fired.

In 2019, a white Fort Worth, Texas, officer fatally shot Atatiana Jefferson through a rear window of her home after responding to a nonemergency call reporting that Jefferson's front door was open. Aaron Dean, the former officer, was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to nearly 12 years in prison.

In 2018, a white Dallas police officer fatally shot Botham Jean, who was unarmed, after mistaking his apartment for her own. Amber Guyger, the former officer, was convicted of murder and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Crump has represented families in each case as part of his effort to force accountability for the killings of Black people at the hands of police. Crump also has represented relatives of Earl Moore, a Springfield man who died after he was strapped face down on a stretcher in December 2022. Two emergency medical professionals face murder charges in that case.

JD Vance slams Kamala Harris during his solo campaign debut as the GOP vice presidential nominee

By LEAH WILLINGHAM, MICHELLE L. PRICE, JULIE CARR SMYTH and BILL BARROW Associated Press RADFORD, Va. (AP) — Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance used his first solo campaign rallies Monday to throw fresh barbs at Vice President Kamala Harris a day after President Joe Biden threw the presidential election into upheaval by dropping out and endorsing his second-in-command to lead Democrats against Donald Trump.

The Ohio senator campaigned at his former high school in Middletown before an evening stop in Radford, Virginia, two venues intended to play up his conservative populist appeal across the Rust Belt and small-town America that he said the Biden-Harris administration has forgotten.

"History will remember Joe Biden as not just a quitter, which he is, but as one of the worst presidents in the history of the United States of America," Vance said in Virginia. "But my friends, Kamala Harris is a million times worse and everybody knows it. She signed up for every single one of Joe Biden's failures, and she lied about his mental capacity to serve as president."

Vance sought to saddle Harris with the administration's record on inflation and immigration, clarifying the lines of attack that the Trump campaign will use even with the change at the top of the Democratic ticket. Harris still must be formally nominated but has quickly consolidated commitments from top party leaders and is now backed publicly by enough delegates to win her party's nomination vote, according to an Associated Press survey.

"The border crisis is a Kamala Harris crisis," Vance said, accusing Biden and Harris together of rolling back immigration policies that Trump enacted in his White House term. He added Harris is "even more extreme than Biden" because, Vance alleged, she has designs on abolishing federal immigration enforcement and domestic police forces.

Vance, 39, drew biographical contrasts with Harris, as well, comparing his service in the Marine Corps and small business ownership to Harris "collecting a government paycheck for the last 20 years."

Harris, 59, was a local prosecutor, then California attorney general and a U.S. senator before she ran for president unsuccessfully in 2020 and became Biden's running mate. Vance was elected to the Senate two years ago.

Vance also fulfilled his role as Trump's biggest cheerleader, promising the former president would lead an era of peace and prosperity in a White House encore, while helping Republicans dominate House, Senate and state contests.

"We've got an opportunity to win races up and down the ballot," he said.

He promised, "You're going to see more and more products stamped with that beautiful logo: 'Made in the USA.'" He also asked the crowd, "Who is sick of sending America's sons and daughters into foreign lands they have no business in?"

The senator carefully stopped short of outright isolationism, however, pledging the U.S. would "punch back hard" when necessary. Vance did not detail any policy approach to the wars that have most vexed the Biden administration: Vladimir Putin's Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Those arguments are at the core of Trump's "America First" brand and highlight Vance's electoral strengths as the son of Appalachia who first came to national prominence with his memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy." Trump's campaign intends to use him heavily across the Rust Belt and swaths of small town America where voters

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have moved to the right and remain especially frustrated over decades of what Vance called "bad trade deals."

Trump and Vance sat Saturday for a joint interview with Fox News that was aired Monday evening after the senator's rallies. Trump nodded to the fact that Vance, during his brief political career, has morphed from being a harsh Trump critic, at one point likening him to Adolf Hitler, to a staunch defender.

"Originally, JD was probably not for me, but he didn't know me," Trump told Fox host Jesse Watters as Vance looked on. "And then when we got to know each other, he liked me maybe more than anybody liked me, and he would stick up for me. ... We just had an automatic chemistry."

Earlier Monday in Ohio, Vance tried to deflect the criticism that Trump, who has refused to accept his 2020 loss to Biden and tried to overturn the results, is a threat to democracy. The senator claimed that the real threat came from the push by "elite Democrats" who "decided to throw Joe Biden overboard" and then have the party line up behind a replacement without primary contests.

Democrats, he said in Virginia, lied "for three-and-a-half years" only to "pull a switcheroo."

While Republicans promoted a unifying message at the Republican National Convention where Vance was nominated last week and decried inflammatory language in the wake of the assassination attempt against Trump, one of the first speakers to introduce Vance in Ohio suggested the country may need to come to civil war if Trump loses in November.

"I believe wholeheartedly, Donald Trump and Butler County's JD Vance are the last chance to save our country," said George Lang, a Republican state senator. "Politically, I'm afraid if we lose this one, it's going to take a civil war to save the country and it will be saved. It's the greatest experiment in the history of mankind."

Lang later apologized after Harris' team highlighted his remarks on a post on X.

"I regret the divisive remarks in the excitement of the moment on stage," he said on the same social network. "Especially in light of the assassination attempt on President Trump last week, we should all be mindful of what is said at political events, myself included."

Vance still has work to do raising his profile. A CNN poll conducted in late June found the majority of registered voters had never heard of Vance or had no opinion of him. Just 13% of registered voters said they had a favorable opinion of Vance and 20% had an unfavorable one, according to the poll.

After Vance was named as Trump's running mate, a startling number of Republican delegates, who are typically party insiders and activists, said they did not know much about the senator.

In his hometown in Ohio, though, he was welcomed as a local star.

Darlene Gooding, 77, of Hamilton, said Vance will provide a welcome contrast to Trump.

"Trump doesn't always come off the best. It's all about him," she said. "JD is wonderful. He gives you the idea he really cares about people."

In Virginia, Trump backers were warming quickly to his new running mate.

Pamela Holloway, who came to see Vance in Radford, described herself as a former Democrat who has gravitated to Republicans. She said she recently bought Vance's book to learn more about how his experiences have shaped his political outlook.

"He's truthful," she said of his writing. "He talks about his mother being an addict. He talks about the hardships with his grandmother" who raised him. "He talks about things that aren't fake."

Donald Trump's lawyers urge New York appeals court to overturn 'egregious' civil fraud verdict

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Fresh off victories in other legal cases, Donald Trump on Monday pressed a New York appeals court to overturn the nearly \$500 million New York civil fraud judgment that threatens to drain his personal cash reserves as he campaigns to retake the White House.

In paperwork filed with the state's mid-level appeals court, the former president's lawyers said Manhattan Judge Arthur Engoron's Feb. 16 finding that Trump lied to banks, insurers and others about his wealth

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was "erroneous" and "egregious."

Trump's appeal arguments echoed many of the gripes he delivered during his trial to TV cameras outside the courtroom.

His lawyers argued that New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit should have been promptly dismissed, the statute of limitations barred some allegations, that no one was harmed by Trump's alleged fraud and that James' involvement in private business transactions threatens to drive business out of the state.

Trump's lawyers contend that Engoron's decision, if upheld, would bestow James, a Democrat, with "limitless power to target anyone she desires, including her self-described political opponents," Trump's lawyers wrote in a 116-page filing with the Appellate Division of the state's trial court.

Engoron rejected many of the same objections as the case proceeded to trial last year, at one point equating them to the plot of the film "Groundhog Day" and fining some of Trump's lawyers \$7,500 each for "repetitive, frivolous" argument. The Appellate Division previously denied Trump's bid to end the case on statute of limitations and other grounds.

Trump posted a \$175 million bond in April to halt collection of the judgment and prevent James' office from seizing his assets while he appeals. If he wins, he won't have to pay the state anything and will get back the money he has put up now.

"Such an outrageous miscarriage of justice is profoundly un-American, and a complete reversal is the only means available to restore public confidence in the integrity of the New York judicial system," Trump lawyer Christopher Kise said in a statement. He called Engoron's decisions "legally bereft" and "untethered to the law or to commercial reality," and described the staggering judgment as "draconian, unlawful, and unconstitutional."

The Appellate Division has said it will hear oral arguments in late September. Trump's lawyers initiated the appeal days after Engoron's ruling and had until Monday to file written arguments.

James' office said Trump and his lawyers are raising unfounded arguments.

"We won this case based on the facts and the law, and we are confident we will prevail on appeal," James' office said in a statement.

Monday's appeal filing is the latest development in a momentous legal and political stretch for Trump, who last week accepted the Republican party's presidential nomination just days after he was hurt in a shooting at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. An attendee was killed and two others were hurt.

On July 1, the Supreme Court sided with Trump in ruling that ex-presidents have immunity from criminal prosecution for official acts performed while in office, further delaying his Washington, D.C., election interference case and causing his sentencing in his New York hush money criminal case to be delayed until Sept. 18 while his lawyers fight to have that conviction thrown out.

On July 15, a federal judge in Florida dismissed Trump's classified documents case, ruling that Special Counsel Jack Smith, who filed the charges, was illegally appointed by the Justice Department. Smith is appealing.

In the civil fraud case, Engoron found that Trump, his company and top executives — including his sons Eric and Donald Trump Jr. — schemed for years to inflate his wealth on financial statements used to secure loans and make deals.

In addition to the hefty monetary penalty, the judge put strict limitations on the ability of Trump's company to do business. Among other consequences, Engoron put the Trump Organization under the supervision of a court-appointed monitor for at least three years.

Trump's appeal ensures that the legal fight over Trump's business practices will persist into the fall and beyond.

If upheld, Engoron's ruling will force Trump to give up a sizable chunk of his fortune. The judge ordered Trump to pay \$355 million in penalties, but with interest the total has grown to more than \$470 million — including \$16.8 million that has accrued since the verdict. The sum will increase by nearly \$112,000 per day until he pays, unless the verdict is overturned.

Trump maintains that he is worth several billion dollars and testified last year that he had about \$400 million in cash, in addition to properties and other investments. James, a Democrat, has said that if Trump is unable to pay, she will seek to seize some of his assets.

Trump and his lawyers laid groundwork for their appeal months by objecting frequently to Engoron's handling of the trial. Trump called Engoron's decision "election interference" and "weaponization against a political opponent." He complained he was being punished for "having built a perfect company, great cash, great buildings, great everything."

During the trial, Trump's lawyers accused Engoron of "tangible and overwhelming" bias. They've also objected to the legal mechanics of James' lawsuit. Trump contends the law she sued him under is a consumer-protection statute that's normally used to rein in businesses that rip off customers.

Trump's lawyers went to the Appellate Division at least 10 times to challenge Engoron's prior rulings, including during the trial in an unsuccessful bid to reverse a gag order and \$15,000 in fines for violations after Trump made a disparaging and false social media post about a key court staffer.

Trump's lawyers have long argued that some of the allegations are barred by the statute of limitations, contending that Engoron failed to comply with an Appellate Division ruling last year that he narrow the scope of the trial to weed out outdated allegations.

The Appellate Division could either uphold Engoron's verdict, reduce or modify the penalty or overturn the decision entirely. If Trump is unsuccessful at the Appellate Division, he can ask the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, to consider taking his case.

Warner Bros. Discovery informs NBA it will match Amazon Prime Video's offer to air games

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

Turner Sports intends to continue its longtime relationship with the NBA.

Warner Bros. Discovery informed the league Monday that it will match the \$1.8 billion per year offer by Amazon Prime Video. Turner has had an NBA package since 1984 and games have been on TNT since the network launched in 1988.

"We have reviewed the offers and matched one of them. This will allow fans to keep enjoying our unparalleled coverage, including the best live game productions in the industry and our iconic studio shows and talent, while building on our proven 40-year commitment for many more years," Warner Bros. Discovery said in a statement. "Our matching paperwork was submitted to the league today. We look forward to the NBA executing our new contract."

The NBA's Board of Governors approved the league's 11-year media rights deals with Disney, NBC and Amazon Prime Video at its meeting in Las Vegas last Tuesday. WBD received all three contracts Wednesday, which started the five-day clock for whether it wanted to match.

The new deals — collectively worth \$76 billion — will begin with the 2025-26 season, and include a game being aired or streamed nationally every night during the second half of the season.

The Prime Video offer has games on Thursday night after it is done carrying NFL games. Its other nights are Friday and Saturday.

Amazon Prime Video did not comment on WBD's intention to match.

An NBA spokesperson said the league is reviewing the matching offer.

If the NBA accepts the matching offer, TNT would likely carry games on Thursday with the other nights being streamed on Max.

Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav sounded an ominous note when he said during an RBC Investor Conference in November 2022 that Turner and WBD "don't have to have the NBA."

Warner Bros. Discovery and the league were unable to reach a deal during the exclusive negotiating period, which expired in April. Zaslav and TNT Sports Chairman/CEO Luis Silberwasser have said during the past couple months, though, that it intended to match one of the deals.

"We're proud of how we have delivered for basketball fans by providing best-in-class coverage throughout

our four-decade partnership with the NBA. In an effort to continue our long-standing partnership, during both exclusive and non-exclusive negotiation periods, we acted in good faith to present strong bids that were fair to both parties," WBD said in a statement. "Regrettably, the league notified us of its intention to accept other offers for the games in our current rights package, leaving us to proceed under the matching rights provision, which is an integral part of our current agreement and the rights we have paid for under it."

People familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press that Amazon's offer included a provision to pay multiple years up front into an escrow account, which many thought would make it hard to match. However, WBD has told the league it has the financial resources to be able to do that.

The Amazon provision was first mentioned by "The Ringer's" Bill Simmons on "The Town" podcast.

The people spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they weren't at liberty to discuss such impending matters.

WBD is paying \$1.4 billion per season under the current nine-year deal, which expires after next season.

Even though WBD would be making a huge financial commitment, it is a necessary one. Without the NBA, it would have had a hard time charging its current subscriber fees to cable and satellite companies.

Retaining the NBA would also mean that the popular "Inside the NBA" show would continue. Charles Barkley had been critical of WBD's negotiating posture and was not optimistic about it matching. Barkley announced at the end of this season that he intended to retire after next season.

It is expected that the NBA would announce the finality of the media deals sometime this week.

ESPN and ABC, which will keep the league's top package, will have a conference finals every year as well as the NBA Finals. NBC and WBD would alternate which one carries one of the conference finals series.

The return of NBC, which carried NBA games from 1990 through 2002, would give the league two broadcast network partners for the first time.

Missouri judge overturns the murder conviction of a man imprisoned for more than 30 years

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A Missouri judge on Monday overturned the conviction of Christopher Dunn, who has spent more than 30 years in prison for a killing he has long contended he didn't commit.

The ruling is likely to free Dunn from prison, but it wasn't immediately clear when that would happen. He has been serving a sentence of life without parole.

St. Louis Circuit Judge Jason Sengheiser's ruling came several weeks after he presided over a three-day hearing on Dunn's fate.

Dunn, now 52, was convicted of first-degree murder in the 1990 shooting of 15-year-old Ricco Rogers. St. Louis Circuit Attorney Gabe Gore filed a motion in February seeking to vacate the guilty verdict. A hearing was in May.

Sengheiser, in his ruling, wrote that the "Circuit Attorney has made a clear and convincing showing of 'actual innocence' that undermines the basis for Dunn's convictions because in light of new evidence, no juror, acting reasonably, would have voted to find Dunn guilty of these crimes beyond a reasonable doubt."

Dunn's attorney, Midwest Innocence Project Executive Director Tricia Rojo Bushnell, said she was "overjoyed" by the judge's ruling.

"Now, Chris looks forward to spending time with his wife and family as a free man," Bushnell said in a statement.

The Missouri Attorney General's Office opposed the effort to vacate Dunn's conviction. Lawyers for the state said at the May hearing that initial testimony from two boys at the scene who identified Dunn as the shooter was correct, even though they later recanted as adults.

"That verdict was accurate, and that verdict should stand," Assistant Attorney General Tristin Estep said at the hearing.

Spokesperson Madeline Sieren said the Attorney General's Office will appeal.

The decision in Dunn's case came days after Sandra Hemme was freed from a western Missouri prison

after serving 43 years for a murder that a judge determined she didn't commit. Bailey's office also opposed Hemme's release.

A Missouri law adopted in 2021 lets prosecutors request hearings when they see evidence of a wrongful conviction. While Bailey's office is not required to oppose such efforts, he also opposed another effort in St. Louis that resulted in Lamar Johnson being freed last year after serving 28 years for a murder case in which a judge ruled he was wrongfully convicted.

Rogers was shot May 18, 1990, when a gunman opened fire while he was with a group of other teenage boys outside a home. DeMorris Stepp, 14, and Michael Davis Jr., 12, both initially identified Dunn as the shooter.

In a recorded interview played at the hearing, Davis said he lied because he thought Dunn was affiliated with a rival gang.

Stepp's story has changed a few times over the years, Gore said at the hearing. Most recently he has said he did not see Dunn as the shooter. Gore said another judge previously found Stepp to be a "completely unreliable witness" and urged Sengheiser to discount him altogether.

Dunn has said he was at his mother's home at the time of the shooting. Childhood friend Nicole Bailey testified that she spoke with him by phone that night and he was on a phone at his mother's house.

Estep, the assistant attorney general, said that alibi could not be trusted and Dunn's story has shifted multiple times over the years. Dunn did not testify at the hearing.

The 2021 law has resulted in the the release of two men who each spent decades in prison. In addition to Johnson, Kevin Strickland was freed in 2021 after more than 40 years for three killings in Kansas City after a judge ruled he was wrongfully convicted in 1979.

Another hearing is next month for Marcellus Williams, who narrowly escaped lethal injection and is now facing another execution date.

St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Wesley Bell filed a motion in January to vacate the conviction of Williams, who was convicted in the fatal stabbing of Lisha Gayle in 1998. Bell's motion said three experts determined that Williams' DNA was not on the handle of the butcher knife used in the killing.

Williams was hours from execution in 2017 when then-Gov. Eric Greitens halted it and appointed a board of inquiry to examine his innocence claim. The board never issued a ruling, and Gov. Mike Parson, like Greitens a Republican, dissolved it last year.

The Missouri Supreme Court ruled this month that Parson had the authority to dissolve the board and set a new execution date of Sept. 24.

CrowdStrike CEO called to testify to Congress over cybersecurity's firm role in global tech outage

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. House leaders are calling on CrowdStrike CEO George Kurtz to testify to Congress about the cybersecurity company's role in sparking the widespread tech outage that grounded flights, knocked banks and hospital systems offline and affected services around the world.

CrowdStrike said this week a "significant number" of the millions of computers that crashed on Friday, causing global disruptions, are back in operation as its customers and regulators await a more detailed explanation of what went wrong.

Republicans who lead the House Homeland Security committee said Monday they want those answers soon.

"While we appreciate CrowdStrike's response and coordination with stakeholders, we cannot ignore the magnitude of this incident, which some have claimed is the largest IT outage in history," said a letter to Kurtz from Rep. Mark E. Green of Tennessee and Rep. Andrew Garbarino of New York.

They added that Americans "deserve to know in detail how this incident happened and the mitigation steps CrowdStrike is taking."

A defective software update sent by CrowdStrike to its customers disrupted airlines, banks, hospitals and other critical services Friday, affecting about 8.5 million machines running Microsoft's Windows operating

system. The painstaking work of fixing it has often required a company's IT crew to manually delete files on affected machines.

CrowdStrike said late Sunday in a blog post that it was starting to implement a new technique to accelerate remediation of the problem. It also said in a brief statement Monday that it is actively in contact with congressional committees.

Shares of the Texas-based cybersecurity company have dropped more than 20% since the meltdown, knocking off billions of dollars in market value.

The scope of the disruptions has also caught the attention of government regulators, including antitrust enforcers, though it remains to be seen if they take action against the company.

"All too often these days, a single glitch results in a system-wide outage, affecting industries from health-care and airlines to banks and auto-dealers," said Lina Khan, chair of the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, in a Sunday post on the social media platform X. "Millions of people and businesses pay the price. These incidents reveal how concentration can create fragile systems."

Conservatives use shooting at Trump rally to attack DEI efforts at Secret Service

By CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press

As Congressional members on both sides of the aisle grilled U.S. Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle Monday on how a gunman was able to fire shots at former President Donald Trump in an assassination attempt, several Republican lawmakers seized on gender and the agency's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts as among the reasons for the security failure.

"Ma'am, you are a DEI horror story," Rep. Tim Burchett of Tennessee told Cheatle during the hours-long hearing in front of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee.

Wisconsin Rep. Glenn Grothman asked the director if she was "not hiring men because of your desire to hit certain targets."

And Texas Rep. Michael Cloud questioned Cheatle's strategic plan for the Secret Service, in which she has championed diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, including her support for the 30x30 Initiative, which seeks to increase the representation of women recruits to 30% by 2030.

"Does every Secret Service agent meet the same qualifications, or do you have different standards for different people?" Cloud asked.

"Yes, sir. Everyone who moves through the application process has to meet the same standards to become a special agent," Cheatle answered.

Conservative backlash against DEI has been on the rise since last June, when the Supreme Court ruled to end affirmative action in college admissions. Several companies have come under attack because of their DEI policies, among them John Deere, Tractor Supply, Target and Bud Light.

The latest DEI attack materialized in full view Monday against the Secret Service and Cheatle, but the issue had been brewing ever since the July 13 assassination attempt at a Trump rally in Pennsylvania, where several female agents were among those protecting the former president and several conservatives questioned their fitness to serve.

"There should not be any women in the Secret Service. These are supposed to be the very best, and none of the very best at this job are women," conservative political commentator Matt Walsh posted on X the morning after the assassination attempt. "If there's a woman doing a job like this, it 100 percent means that a more qualified male was passed over."

Meghan McCain, daughter of the late senator and U.S. presidential candidate John McCain, reposted Walsh's statement, adding: "The notion that men and women are the same is just absurd. You need to be taller than the candidate to protect them with your body. Why do they have these short women (one who can't holster a gun apparently) guarding Trump? This is embarrassing and dangerous."

Photos of the immediate aftermath of the shooting show a female agent shielding Trump with her body. David Glasgow, executive director of the Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at New

York University School of Law, said the fresh DEI criticism is no surprise.

"It's now a pretty consistent pattern whenever anything goes wrong that it gets blamed on DEI," he said. "After the Baltimore Bridge collapse, there were people blaming DEI," and the same happened after Boeing was dealing with aircraft safety issues.

Massachusetts Democrat Ayanna Pressley said it is "disgraceful" that Republicans are "trotting out sexist tropes" blaming women for the security failures at Trump's rally. She said she believed her Republican counterparts were exploiting the shooting to "continue to attack progress towards racial justice and gender equity in America." She also reserved criticism for Cheatle for not adequately addressing questions during Monday's hearing.

"Every day, Director Cheatle, that you fail to give us answers, they are given more oxygen to make their baseless claims that women and people of color are responsible for tragic events. And that is dangerous too," Pressley said.

For her part, Cheatle said "the incident on the 13th has nothing to do with DEI. The incident on the 13th has to do with a gap in either planning or communication."

Under Cheatle, the Secret Service has continued its pledge to the 30x30 Initiative, which aims to improve the representation and experiences of women in law enforcement. Currently, women make up only 12% of sworn officers and 3% of police leadership in the U.S., according to organization's website. Cheatle herself is only the second woman to head up the Secret Service.

Dozens more police departments and law enforcement agencies have also taken up the 30x30 Initiative, including in red states like Iowa, North Dakota, Arkansas, Kansas, and Florida. And so far, none of those departments has pulled back on the efforts.

Catrina Bonus, president of Women in Federal Law Enforcement, called the attacks on DEI "disheartening."

"Today's rhetoric questioning our presence in law enforcement is not just outdated; it is rooted in ignorance," she said in a statement. "It dishonors the trailblazers who faced unimaginable challenges to make this profession more inclusive and equitable — as well as to the next generation, to show them that law enforcement is filled with open doors and opportunities and through hard work and determination, they can achieve anything they put their minds to."

Maureen McGough, co-founder of the 30x30 Initiative, pushed back hard on the gender critique.

"We think about the women who are putting their lives on the line every day to do this job in law enforcement, who were called into service, who make incredible sacrifices. And to have people who have never set foot in the arena just indict them just because of their gender, it's sad, you know, it's heartbreaking," she said.

"But it also is an opportunity for us to double down on our efforts," McGough added.

Biden's withdrawal injects uncertainty into wars, trade disputes and other foreign policy challenges

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

Joe Biden's withdrawal from the U.S. presidential race injects greater uncertainty into the world at a time when Western leaders are grappling with wars in Ukraine and Gaza, a more assertive China in Asia and the rise of the far right in Europe.

During a five-decade career in politics, Biden developed extensive personal relationships with multiple foreign leaders that none of the potential replacements on the Democratic ticket can match. After his announcement, messages of support and gratitude for his years of public service poured in from near and far.

The scope of foreign policy challenges facing the next U.S. president makes clear how consequential what happens in Washington is for the rest of the planet. Here's a look at some of them.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Biden's strong support for Israel since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack has its roots in his half-century of support for the country as a senator, vice president, then president.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an ally of former President Donald Trump who has clashed

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with Biden over Israel's bombardment and siege of Gaza in recent months, did not immediately comment on Biden's decision to drop out.

Other officials stepped up to praise Biden's staunch defense of their country, with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant thanking Biden for his "steadfast backing" and President Isaac Herzog hailing him as a "true ally of the Jewish people."

Before jetting off to Washington Monday — where he is set to address a joint session of Congress Wednesday — Netanyahu said that "regardless of who the American people choose as their president, Israel remains America's indispensable and strong ally."

With Vice President Kamala Harris being eyed as a potential replacement for Biden, Israelis scrambled to understand what her candidacy would mean for their country as it confronts increasing global isolation over its war against Hamas.

Israel's left-wing Haaretz daily newspaper ran a story scrutinizing Harris' reputation as Biden's "bad cop" who has vocally admonished Israel for not doing enough to protect civilians.

"With Biden leaving, Israel has lost perhaps the last Zionist president," said Alon Pinkas, a former Israeli consul general in New York.

Palestinians interviewed in Gaza's central city of Deir al-Balah on Monday said it didn't matter who became the Democratic candidate as long as Israel kept dropping U.S.-manufactured bombs on the enclave.

"We feel the United States is a partner in the assault on Gaza," Hassan Shaqalieh said.

Experts agreed. "Both (Biden and Harris) ultimately are running on a platform and have a history of endorsing Israeli hard-line policies against Palestinians," said Tahani Mustafa, a Palestinian analyst at the Crisis Group.

UKRAINE

Any Democratic candidate would likely continue Biden's legacy of staunch military support for Ukraine. But frustration with the Biden administration has grown in Ukraine and Europe over the slow pace of U.S. aid and restrictions on the use of Western weapons.

"Most Europeans realize that Ukraine is increasingly going to be their burden," said Sudha David-Wilp, director of the Berlin office of the German Marshall Fund, a research institute. "Everyone is trying to get ready for all the possible outcomes."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X that he respected the "tough but strong decision" by Biden to drop out of the campaign, and he thanked Biden for his help "in preventing (Russian President Vladimir) Putin from occupying our country."

Trump has promised to end Russia's war on Ukraine in one day if he is elected — a prospect that has raised fears in Ukraine that Russia might be allowed to keep the territory it occupies.

Trump's vice presidential pick, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, is among Congress' most vocal opponents of U.S. aid for Ukraine and has further raised the stakes for Kyiv.

Russia, meanwhile, dismissed the importance of the race, insisting that no matter what happened, Moscow would press on in Ukraine.

"The goals of the special military operation will be achieved," Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said on the Telegram messaging app, using the Kremlin's term for the war in Ukraine.

CHINA

In recent months, both Biden and Trump have tried to show voters who can best stand up to Beijing's growing military strength and belligerence and protect U.S. businesses and workers from low-priced Chinese imports.

Biden has hiked tariffs on electric vehicles from China, and Trump has promised to implement tariffs of 60% on all Chinese products.

Trump's "America First" doctrine exacerbated tensions with Beijing. But disputes with the geopolitical rival and economic colossus over wars, trade, technology and security continued into Biden's term.

China's official reaction to the U.S. presidential race has been careful.

"The U.S. elections are U.S. internal politics. I have no comment on this," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning.

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IRAN

With Iran's proxies across the Middle East increasingly entangled in the Israel-Hamas war, the U.S. confronts a region in disarray.

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis struck Tel Aviv for the first time last week, prompting retaliatory Israeli strikes inside war-torn Yemen. Cross-border attacks between Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group and the Israeli military have stoked fears of an all-out regional conflagration.

Hamas, which also receives support from Iran, continues to fight Israel even nine months into a war that has killed 39,000 Palestinians and displaced over 80% of Gaza's population.

The U.S. has accused Iran of expanding its nuclear program and enriching uranium to an unprecedented 60%, near-weapons-grade levels.

After then-President Trump in 2018 withdrew from Tehran's landmark nuclear deal with world powers, Biden sought to reverse his predecessor's hawkish stance. But his administration has failed to renegotiate the agreement and kept severe sanctions in place.

The sudden death of Ebrahim Raisi — the supreme leader's hard-line protege — in a helicopter crash vaulted a new reformist to the presidency in Iran. Masoud Pezeshkian has said he wants to help Iran open up to the world but has maintained a defiant tone against the U.S.

During a briefing Monday, Nasser Kanaani, spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, brushed off Biden's withdrawal.

"To us, the coming and going of governments and persons on top of the U.S. administration is not important on its own," he said. "What can change relations is a fundamental change in this (U.S.) hostile policy against Iran."

EUROPE AND NATO

Many Europeans were happy to see Trump go after his years of disparaging the European Union and undermining NATO. Trump's seemingly dismissive attitude toward European allies in last month's presidential debate did nothing to assuage those concerns.

Biden, on the other hand, has supported close American relations with bloc leaders.

That closeness was on stark display after Biden's decision to bow out of the race. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk called his choice "probably the most difficult one in your life."

The newly installed British prime minister, Keir Starmer, said he respected Biden's "decision based on what he believes is in the best interests of the American people." Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris called Biden a "proud American with an Irish soul."

The question of whether NATO can maintain its momentum in supporting Ukraine and checking the ambitions of authoritarian states hangs in the balance of this presidential election, analysts say.

"They don't want to see Donald Trump as president. So there's quite a bit of relief but also quite a bit of nervousness" about Biden's decision to drop out, said Jeremy Shapiro, research director of the European Council on Foreign Relations. "Like many in the United States, but perhaps more so, they are really quite confused."

MEXICO

The historically close relationship between Mexico and the U.S. has been marked in recent years by disagreements over commerce, the fight against cartels, energy and climate change.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who took power in 2018, has cooperated with both Trump and Biden administrations to reduce illegal immigration south of the border.

López Obrador, who has boasted on many occasions about his good relationship with his "friend" Trump, said Monday that Biden's decision to withdraw from the November presidential race is a "sovereign" one "that corresponds to U.S. authorities and leaders."

His caution was shared by Mexico's future president Claudia Sheinbaum, who told a news conference that Biden's decision was his own to take and expressed to have "a lot of respect" for the U.S. president.

Secret Service director, grilled by lawmakers on the Trump assassination attempt, says 'we failed'

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, FARNOUSH AMIRI and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle said Monday that her agency failed in its mission to protect former President Donald Trump, as lawmakers of both major political parties demanded during a highly contentious congressional hearing that she resign over security failures that allowed a gunman to scale a roof and open fire at a campaign rally.

Cheatle was berated for hours by Republicans and Democrats, repeatedly angering lawmakers by evading questions about the investigation during the first hearing over the July 13 assassination attempt. Cheatle called the attempt on Trump's life the Secret Service's "most significant operational failure" in decades, and vowed to "move heaven and earth" to get to the bottom of what went wrong and make sure there's no repeat of it.

"The Secret Service's solemn mission is to protect our nation's leaders. On July 13th, we failed," she told lawmakers on the House Oversight and Accountability Committee.

Cheatle acknowledged that the Secret Service was told about a suspicious person two to five times before the shooting at the Butler, Pennsylvania, rally. She also revealed that the roof from which Thomas Matthew Crooks opened fire had been identified as a potential vulnerability days before the rally. Cheatle said she apologized to Trump in a phone call after the assassination attempt.

Yet Cheatle remained defiant that she was the "right person" to lead the Secret Service, even as she said she takes full responsibility the security lapses. When Republican Rep. Nancy Mace suggested Cheatle begin drafting her resignation letter from the hearing room, Cheatle responded, "No, thank you."

In a rare moment of unity for the often divided committee, the Republican chairman, Rep. James Comer, and its top Democrat, Rep. Jamie Raskin, issued a letter calling on Cheatle to step down.

The White House didn't immediately comment on whether President Joe Biden still has confidence in Cheatle after her testimony.

Democrats and Republicans were united in their exasperation as Cheatle said she didn't know or couldn't answer numerous questions more than a week after the shooting that left one spectator dead. At one point, Mace used profanity as she accused Cheatle of lying and dodging questions, prompting calls for lawmakers to show "decorum."

Lawmakers pressed Cheatle on how the gunman could get so close to the Republican presidential nominee when he was supposed to be carefully guarded, and why Trump was allowed to take the stage after local law enforcement had identified Crooks as suspicious.

"It has been 10 days since an assassination attempt on a former president of the United States. Regardless of party, there need to be answers," said Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-New York.

Cheatle acknowledged that Crooks had been seen by local law enforcement before the shooting with a rangefinder, a small device resembling binoculars that hunters use to measure distance from a target. She said the Secret Service would never have taken Trump onto the stage if it had known there was an "actual threat." Local law enforcement took a photo of Crooks and shared it after seeing him acting suspiciously, but he wasn't deemed to be a "threat" until seconds before he opened fire, she said.

"An individual with a backpack is not a threat," Cheatle said. "An individual with a rangefinder is not a threat."

Cheatle said local enforcement officers were inside the building from which Crooks fired. But when asked why there were no agents on the roof or if the Secret Service used drones to monitor the area, Cheatle said she is still waiting for the investigation to play out, prompting groans and outbursts from members on the committee.

"Director Cheatle, because Donald Trump is alive, and thank God he is, you look incompetent," said Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio. "If he were killed, you would look culpable."

Rep. Ro Khanna, one of the Democrats who joined the calls for Cheatle to resign, noted that the Secret

Service director who presided over the agency when there was an attempted assassination of former Republican President Ronald Reagan later stepped down.

"The one thing we have to have in this country are agencies that transcend politics and have the confidence of independents, Democrats, Republicans, progressives and conservatives," Khanna said, adding that the Secret Service was no longer one of those agencies.

Trump was wounded in the ear, a former Pennsylvania fire chief was killed and two other attendees were injured when Crooks opened fire with an AR-style rifle shortly after Trump began speaking.

Cheatle said the agency hopes to have its internal investigation completed in 60 days. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has separately appointed a bipartisan, independent panel to review the assassination attempt, while the department's inspector general has opened three investigations.

Meanwhile, a bipartisan delegation of about a dozen members of the House Committee on Homeland Security toured the shooting site Monday. The lawmakers said they were the first group outside law enforcement to climb onto the roof where the shooter positioned himself.

Authorities have been hunting for clues into what motivated Crooks but have not found any ideological bent that could help explain his actions. Investigators who searched his phone found photos of Trump, Biden and other senior government officials and found that he had looked up the dates for the Democratic National Convention as well as Trump's appearances. He also searched for information about major depressive disorder.

The attack on Trump was the most serious attempt to assassinate a president or presidential candidate since Reagan was shot in 1981. It was the latest in a series of security lapses by the agency that has drawn investigations and public scrutiny over the years.

Cheatle took over two years ago as head of the Secret Service's 7,800 special agents, uniformed officers and other staffers whose main purpose is protecting presidents, vice presidents, their families, former presidents and others. In announcing her appointment, Biden said Cheatle had served on his vice presidential detail and called her a "distinguished law enforcement professional with exceptional leadership skills" who had his "complete trust."

Cheatle took the reins from James M. Murray as multiple congressional committees and an internal watchdog investigated missing text messages from when Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The Secret Service says they were purged during a technology transition.

Biden's withdrawal from the US presidential race spells new uncertainty for Ukraine

By ANDREW MELDRUM and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to end his campaign for reelection brings a new element of uncertainty for Ukraine, which is struggling to fend off Russian military advances even as it worries about the future of American support.

The prospect of victory for former President Donald Trump, the Republican contender, has long concerned Kyiv, which fears he would choke off support and force Ukraine to sue for peace on terms that favor Russia. The Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion in early 2022, leading to more than two years of war.

But while the Democrats hope Biden's decision to drop out and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris will inject energy into their campaign, it's unclear whether it makes Trump's defeat more likely. Officials in Moscow, widely thought to favor Trump, were noncommittal.

Kyiv resident Yulia Loginova said she found it impossible to predict how Biden's departure would affect Ukraine.

"I don't know, honestly," she said. "Surprises every day. But he did the right thing."

Phillips O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, said Biden's withdrawal "changes the narrative of the campaign," but it's too soon to say how much it will alter the dynamic of the presidential election.

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"If it makes the Democrats more likely to win, then Ukraine's happy," he said. "I don't think a Harris administration would be that different from a Biden administration."

Ukraine may be facing tough times regardless of who wins. While the U.S. is Ukraine's most crucial backer, under Biden it has sometimes been seen as a frustrating friend.

Standing in Kyiv's Independence Square beside a sea of small Ukrainian flags left in tribute to those killed in the war, a soldier said victory "is impossible without the support of the U.S.A., that is a fact. They have the largest number of weapons, influence and everything."

Still, the soldier, who gave only his nickname, Sadik, in line with military rules, said that if the U.S. had provided more support, "the war would have ended a long time ago."

But a new Trump administration would make things far worse, he added.

"If Trump wins, there will be little or no weapons," he said, adding that he feared Ukraine would be forced into concessions to end the war, where the Kremlin's troops are making gradual battlefield gains.

Trump has boasted that he could end the conflict within 24 hours, and Ukrainians think any such settlement would be on Russia's terms.

Trump's choice of Ohio Sen. JD Vance, an opponent of U.S. military aid to Ukraine, as vice-presidential running mate has triggered more alarm.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said during a visit to Britain last week that dealing with Trump would be hard work – but he added that Ukrainians aren't "afraid of hard work." Ukraine's leader and Trump spoke by phone on Friday, a call both men described as good on social media platform X.

Zelenskyy thanked Biden for his "unwavering support" and "bold steps" during the war.

"The current situation in Ukraine and all of Europe is no less challenging, and we sincerely hope that America's continued strong leadership will prevent Russian evil from succeeding or making its aggression pay off," Zelenskyy wrote on X.

Yet Ukraine's gratitude for U.S. support is tinged with frustration at its limitations.

As Russia has stepped up attacks on Ukraine's cities and infrastructure, Zelenskyy's government has pushed for the Biden administration to authorize the use of American-supplied weapons to strike deep inside Russia. Ukraine wants to target the sites, often far from the border, that Moscow uses to launch airborne attacks on Ukraine. Washington has not given permission out of concern the conflict could escalate.

"The Ukrainians are pretty disappointed with Biden," said Edward Lucas, a senior adviser at the Center for European Policy Analysis. "Biden's dithering has a price, paid in the destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure and the slaughter of Ukrainian civilians, and in unnecessary battlefield casualties.

"So although Trump might be worse ... a continuation of the Biden line is already pretty grim."

Several senior U.S. Democrats have quickly lined up to support Harris as the nominee. On foreign policy, her public statements have — unsurprisingly — been in lockstep with Biden's. She told an audience at the Munich Security Conference in February that "President Joe Biden and I stand with Ukraine" and pledged the administration would "work to secure critical weapons and resources that Ukraine so badly needs."

Heather Hurlburt, a former Biden administration official now with the Chatham House think tank, said Harris had been "very front and center in the Ukraine policy," and would likely keep to the same course as Biden.

In Moscow, meanwhile, officials suggested Biden's departure would not deter them from their goals in the war and offered no opinion on whether it would make a difference to icy Russia-U.S. relations — though Trump and President Vladimir Putin have traded praise over the years.

"It's not our business to assess the U.S. president's decisions," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. "This is something the U.S. voters should be concerned about."

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said on the Telegram messaging app that Biden's departure wouldn't change Russia's strategy in Ukraine.

"The goals of the special military operation will be achieved," he added, using the Kremlin's term for the war.

Ukraine and America's other allies also worry the U.S. could grow less dependable regardless of who wins. With a divided electorate and Congress, the next president could easily become consumed by domestic

challenges before even reckoning with multiple flashpoints around the world. Gridlock in Congress that stalled a \$61 billion package of military aid to Ukraine for months before it was finally approved brought home the precariousness of the situation.

In Kyiv, Ukrainians absorbed the latest twist in a U.S. election that may determine their country's future. "I love Biden because he supported Ukraine," said Mykyta Kolesnikov, who manages a car wash business. "He sent us important assistance for the war when we needed it."

But Kolesnikov, 21, said he understood that Biden had to step aside and just hoped the Democrats would field a stronger candidate.

"Zelenskyy says that he can work with Trump, but it will be very hard for Ukraine to work with Trump and his team," Kolesnikov said.

Karen Read in court as judge schedules January retrial in Boston police officer's death

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Karen Read made a brief court appearance on Monday to set dates going forward for the high-profile murder case against her involving her Boston police officer boyfriend that ended in a mistrial earlier this month.

Read is accused of ramming into John O'Keefe with her SUV and leaving him for dead in a snowstorm in January 2022. Her two-month trial ended when jurors declared they were hopelessly deadlocked and a judge declared a mistrial on the fifth day of deliberations.

The judge will hear oral arguments on a defense motion to dismiss two of the three charges against her on Aug. 9, and a retrial was scheduled for Jan. 27. The court hearing lasted just a few minutes.

A boisterous crowd of several dozen, many dressed in pink and carrying signs claiming Read is innocent, greeted her with cheers as she arrived at court. A smaller group of about 20 people, dressed in blue, came out in support of O'Keefe.

In several motions, the defense contends four jurors have said the jury unanimously reached a not guilty verdict on two of the three charges against Read, including murder. The jurors reported being deadlocked only on the remaining charge of manslaughter while operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol and trying her again for murder would be unconstitutional double jeopardy, they said.

The defense also argues Judge Beverly Cannone abruptly announced the mistrial without questioning the jurors about where they stood on each of the three charges Read faced and without giving lawyers for either side a chance to comment.

Prosecutors described the defense request to drop charges of second-degree murder and leaving the scene of a deadly accident an "unsubstantiated but sensational post-trial claim" based on "hearsay, conjecture and legally inappropriate reliance as to the substance of jury deliberations."

As they push against a retrial, the defense also wants the judge to hold a "post-verdict inquiry" and question all 12 jurors if necessary to establish the record they say should have been created before the mistrial was declared, showing jurors "unanimously acquitted the defendant of two of the three charges against her."

After the mistrial, Cannone ordered the names of the jurors to not be released for 10 days. She extended that order indefinitely Thursday after one of the jurors filed a motion saying they feared for their own and their family's safety if the names are made public. The order does not preclude a juror from coming forward and identifying themselves, but so far none have done so.

Prosecutors argued the defense was given a chance to respond and, after one note from the jury indicating it was deadlocked, told the court there had been sufficient time and advocated for the jury to be declared deadlocked. Prosecutors wanted deliberations to continue, which they did before a mistrial was declared the following day.

"Contrary to the representation made in the defendant's motion and supporting affidavits, the defen-

dant advocated for and consented to a mistrial, as she had adequate opportunities to object and instead remained silent which removes any double jeopardy bar to retrial," prosecutors wrote in their motion.

Read, a former adjunct professor at Bentley College, had been out drinking with O'Keefe, a 16-year member of the Boston police who was found outside the Canton home of another Boston police officer. An autopsy found O'Keefe died of hypothermia and blunt force trauma.

The defense contended O'Keefe was killed inside the home after Read dropped him off and that those involved chose to frame her because she was a "convenient outsider."

GOP threatened to sue over November ballot if Biden dropped out. Experts call that 'ridiculous'

By ROBERT YOON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even before President Joe Biden's long-sSpeculated withdrawal from the 2024 presidential race, allies of former President Donald Trump floated the possibility of suing to block Democrats from having anyone other than Biden on the ballot in November.

But election administration and legal experts said the timing of Biden's exit on Sunday makes it unlikely that any Republican ballot access challenges will succeed, with some calling the idea "ridiculous" and "frivolous." Democrats are on safe legal ground as they identify a new standard-bearer, they say, because the party hasn't officially chosen its nominee. That typically occurs with a vote of delegates at the party's convention.

"It's ridiculous for people to talk about 'replacing Biden.' He hasn't been nominated yet," said Richard Winger, a leading expert on state ballot access laws and the longtime editor of the "Ballot Access News" newsletter.

Talk of possible Republican legal challenges has been swirling since Democrats began discussing — privately and publicly — whether Biden should drop out of the race.

In June, a conservative Washington-based think tank laid out what it described as "the contentious path ahead" if Biden did not seek reelection.

"There is the potential for pre-election litigation in some states that would make the process difficult and perhaps unsuccessful," said Mike Howell, executive director of the Heritage Foundation's "Oversight Project" in a public memo. Howell identified three battleground states — Georgia, Nevada and Wisconsin — as possible places where pre-election litigation could be filed to try to block a presidential candidate from withdrawing.

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson also raised the specter of legal challenges on Sunday morning, hours before Biden's announcement.

"I think they have got legal hurdles in some of these states, and it'll be litigated, I would expect, on the ground there, and they will have to sort through all that. They have got a real problem," Johnson, R-La., said on CNN's "State of the Union."

But several experts disagree. Trey Grayson, Kentucky's former two-term Republican Secretary of State, said there are no grounds to challenge the Democratic Party from picking a post-Biden nominee.

"It's a pretty frivolous claim," said Grayson, who also served as president of the National Association of Secretaries of State and chair of the Republican Secretaries of State Association. "The filing deadlines haven't passed yet, and the Democrats haven't nominated anybody yet."

Delegates from every state, territory and the District of Columbia select their parties' presidential and vice presidential nominees using a process outlined in national party rules. Even though Biden won enough delegates as of March 12 to unofficially clinch the nomination — making him the presumptive nominee — because he ended his campaign before delegates voted, the task of selecting the party's candidate for the November election still falls to convention delegates.

Had Biden stepped aside after the convention, a different process would have been triggered, one that could have been complicated by state ballot access deadlines.

"The parties control the process as to who their nominee is," said Edward B. Foley, a law professor who

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leads Ohio State University's election law program. "I just don't see how the Republican Party or anyone associated with the Republican Party would have any standing to bring any litigation in connection with this."

An Associated Press review of relevant state election laws showed that Biden's withdrawal Sunday came well before the presidential ballot access deadlines in every state that specifies one.

Of the three states mentioned in the Heritage Foundation memo, Wisconsin was the only one with a specific deadline: Sept. 3. Neither Georgia nor Nevada specifies a deadline for a candidate to be placed on the ballot.

The state with the earliest ballot-access deadline is Iowa, which requires parties to provide the names of their nominees no later than 81 days before the general election, or Aug. 16. The law further states that for late conventions, like next month's Democratic National Convention, which begins Aug. 19 and concludes Aug. 22, the parties have until five days after the convention's adjournment to report its nominees to the state.

A handful of states have their deadlines on Aug. 22.

Ohio had a deadline of Aug. 7, but the state eventually enacted a law changing the date to accommodate the Democratic convention, as it has done in previous years for both parties.

Before Biden dropped out, the Democratic National Committee had decided to move forward with a virtual roll call in early August, ahead of the convention. The DNC said the earlier roll call could head off any potential avenue for legal challenges because Ohio's law technically does not take effect until September.

In an interview with Rolling Stone released July 4, Heritage Foundation's Howell referenced statements Biden had made where he referred to himself as the Democratic nominee. "If he, in those statements, is legally arguing that he is the nominee, I think that should be read as him circumventing the formal convention process," he said in the interview. "And Biden's doing so has tremendous legal implications and statutory impact for states that specifically point to the DNC for who shows up on the ballot as the party's nominee."

Grayson disputed the premise that Biden's statement that he was the nominee carries any legal significance.

"Someone calling themselves the nominee doesn't make them the nominee," he said. "It's no different from Trump saying he's the nominee before the convention. He wasn't either."

Howell told the AP on Sunday, "We're deep in the preparation stages for our next move and won't be telegraphing it in the media."

"As you can understand, there is a massive dark money operation and some very conniving donors and power centers pulling strings right now," Howell said. "They read the news just like anyone else and they will find out about our next move when we make it."

Winger added that even if Biden had waited until after the nominee had dropped out, there is historical precedent for replacing a nominee on a presidential ticket. In 1912, Vice President James Sherman died six days before Election Day while running for reelection on the ticket with Republican President William Howard Taft.

According to news accounts, the Republican National Committee met after the election and selected Columbia University's Nicholas Murray Butler to replace Sherman, and Republican electors cast their votes for Butler instead of Sherman when the Electoral College met. The choice was not controversial, since Taft had already lost the election.

In 1972, Democratic vice presidential nominee Thomas Eagleton of Missouri withdrew from the ticket after the convention following his disclosure that he had undergone psychiatric treatment. The DNC met the following week and held a vote selecting Sargent Shriver, brother-in-law to the late President John F. Kennedy, to replace him.

"That was done in August, and nobody sued," said Winger. "It's just not a problem."

Israel orders evacuation of part of Gaza humanitarian zone as war's toll passes 39,000 Palestinians

By WAFAA SHURAFI and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The Israeli military ordered the evacuation Monday of part of a crowded area in the Gaza Strip it had designated a humanitarian zone, saying it is planning an operation against Hamas militants there. The order triggered a new flight of Palestinians, many of whom had taken refuge there just in the past weeks.

Thousands of Palestinians, many carrying backpacks and accompanied by children, walked down dusty roads under the scorching sun. Dilapidated cars with belongings tied on top maneuvered past buildings flattened by previous strikes. Many Palestinians have been uprooted multiple times in search of safety during Israel's air and ground campaign.

"We do not know where we are walking," said Kholoud Al Dadas, as she clutched her children. "This is our seventh or eighth time we have been displaced. While we were sleeping in our homes, they started shooting at us, bombing from everywhere." Moments later, she collapsed in exhaustion.

Reflecting the shrinking space for Palestinians, the new evacuation order reduces by some 10 square kilometers (4 square miles) the 60-square kilometer (23 square mile) "humanitarian zone" to which Israel has been telling Palestinians to flee to escape its offensives.

Most of the area covered by the new order comprises parts of the southern city of Khan Younis, which had filled up with people since early May as they fled Israel troops assaulting Rafah, further south. The number of people in the evacuation zone was not immediately known, U.N. officials said.

On Monday, multiple Israeli airstrikes hit around Khan Younis, killing at least 70 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, citing figures from Nasser Hospital. Associated Press video showed a pall of smoke drifting over the city after one explosion. Another strike hit outside Al-Aqsa Hospital in the central town of Deir-Al-Balah, where many people were living in tents on the street, killing one person and wounding three.

The Israeli military said it is planning an operation against Hamas militants who have embedded themselves in the humanitarian zone and used it to launch rockets toward Israel.

Israel first declared the zone early in the war, centered on Muwasi, a largely rural area of dunes on the Mediterranean coast. At the time, in November, the military said it would only strike there with precision hits on individual Hamas leaders, saying it was "not a safe zone, but it is a safer place than any other" in Gaza. It expanded the zone in May to take in people fleeing Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population at the time had crowded.

Earlier this month, Israel estimated at least 1.8 million Palestinians were in the expanded zone — the bulk of Gaza's pre-war population of 2.3 million people.

Despite its name, the area has few humanitarian provisions. The tent camps that fill the beaches, empty lots and streets lack sanitation and medical facilities and have limited access to aid, U.N. and humanitarian groups say. Families live amid mountains of trash and streams contaminated by sewage.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the toll from Israel's nine-month war against Hamas in Gaza has surpassed 39,000 Palestinians killed and 89,800 wounded. The ministry's count does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

The war began with an assault by Hamas militants on southern Israel on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took about 250 hostages. About 120 remain held, about a third of them believed to be dead, according to Israeli authorities.

Delicate negotiations continued for a cease-fire and hostage release, with U.S. and Israeli officials expressing hope that an agreement was closer than ever. A negotiating team will be sent to continue talks on Thursday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said. Egypt, Qatar and the United States are pushing Israel and Hamas toward a phased cease-fire deal that would stop the fighting and free the hostages.

Netanyahu left Monday on a much-anticipated trip to the United States to meet with President Joe Biden, who on Sunday said he would not seek another term, and address Congress. Netanyahu said that regardless of who becomes the next U.S. president, "our enemies must know that Israel and the United States

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stand together tomorrow and always." He said he will thank Biden for more than 40 years of friendship, while pushing him for more support on certain issues.

The Israeli military said it was continuing to operate in central and southern Gaza. At least 38 people were killed in the southern city of Khan Younis, according to hospital officials and a count of the bodies by an Associated Press journalist. One person was killed and three injured in a strike outside Al-Aqsa Hospital in the central town of Deir-Al-Balah, where many people have sheltered outside the facility.

The Israeli military announced the deaths of two additional Israeli hostages, saying they believe Yagev Buchstab, 35, and Alex Dancyg, 76, kidnapped on Oct. 7, were no longer alive, based on intelligence. Both were seen alive in Gaza by other hostages who had been released. Dancyg, a Holocaust educator, gave history lectures to hostages to pass the time, according to the Hostage and Missing Families Forum.

Netanyahu has vowed to wipe out Hamas' military and governing capabilities and secure the return of the remaining hostages. Families of hostages and thousands of other Israelis have held weekly demonstrations to urge the prime minister to reach a cease-fire deal that would bring their loved ones home.

Also Monday, Israeli police said a Canadian citizen was killed after threatening Israeli security forces with a knife near the Gaza border. The Israeli military said the man drove to the entrance of an Israeli town close to the border, left his vehicle and approached security forces with a knife. The forces opened fire and killed the man. There were no other injuries.

The attack took place at the entrance to the Israeli town of Netiv HaAsara, 300 meters (yards) north of the border. On Oct. 7, Netiv HaAsara was attacked and 20 residents were killed after gunmen passed over the concrete border wall using paragliders, according to Israeli military officials.

Israel has experienced a wave of stabbing attacks across the country during the war in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the United Nations accused Israel of targeting a U.N. humanitarian convoy in central Gaza. Philippe Lazzarini, the head of UNRWA, the main U.N. group supporting Palestinians in Gaza, said that on Sunday Israel shot at the convoy near an Israeli military checkpoint and five bullets pierced the clearly marked armored U.N. vehicle.

Lazzarini said the convoy's movement had been coordinated with Israeli forces. No one was injured, but Lazzarini condemned the military for targeting humanitarian workers. The Israeli military did not immediately comment.

Troubled Boeing stays close to the ground at a major UK air show

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — European planemaker Airbus plans to show off its newest passenger jet with daily flight demonstrations during one of the world's biggest aviation trade fairs. But an ongoing safety and manufacturing crisis has rival Boeing keeping a lower profile at the Farnborough International Air Show.

The beleaguered American company isn't bringing any jetliners to take part in aerial displays at the event that kicks off Monday near London. Ahead of the show's opening, the company said it remained focused on satisfying the concerns of U.S. regulators and "meeting our customer commitments" rather than selling a lot of planes.

Chief Operating Officer Stephanie Pope said Boeing was focused on "predictable deliveries" of jets to airline customers, and getting production of its troubled 737 Max jets back up to 38 per month.

"This is transformational change. And you all know we have slowed down our factories pretty significantly to execute that change," Pope, who also serves as chief executive of Boeing's commercial airplanes division, told reporters Sunday.

The Farnborough expo, held every other year in turn with the Paris Air Show, is traditionally a venue for aerospace companies to showcase their newest technological developments and for manufacturers to trumpet a flurry of orders for new passenger, cargo and military aircraft. Organizers expect about 1,500 exhibitors from 42 countries and 80,000 visitors during the weeklong event.

Boeing's subdued presence at this year's show underscores its continuing woes.

Boeing Global President Brendan Nelson said in a news release that the company has "reduced our commercial airplanes display and flight demonstrations at the show, and will focus on new technology,

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sustainability, security and services solutions.”

The company has been reeling since a door plug blew out of an Alaska Airlines 737 Max 9 during a flight at the start of the year, rekindling safety fears that were subsiding after two crashes of Max jets in 2018 and 2019 killed 346 people in Indonesia and Ethiopia.

The blowout of the panel, coupled with a string of current and former employees coming forward to allege quality-control lapses and retaliation against whistleblowers, brought renewed government scrutiny. The Justice Department revived a criminal fraud charge against Boeing in connection with the fatal crashes. Boeing agreed to plead guilty this month as part of an agreement that calls for an independent monitor to oversee the company’s compliance.

Boeing’s leadership is in limbo as it searches for a successor to CEO David Calhoun, who’s stepping down at the end of the year. Calhoun apologized to crash victims’ relatives during a grilling from U.S. senators last month over the company’s safety record.

“Hopefully, a new CEO next year will make that horrible situation better, but until then, people are just focused on circling the wagons and doing what they can to keep the company functioning,” said Richard Aboulafia, a longtime aerospace analyst and now a consultant at AeroDynamic Advisory. “It’s a tragedy and an embarrassment, but hopefully this air show will be remembered as the darkness before the dawn.”

Boeing’s “customers have been very supportive,” said Pope, a possible successor to Calhoun. But “it still doesn’t take away the reality that we’ve disappointed them. And we’ve impacted their business.”

“We are a stable company,” she said.

While Airbus will take part in the aerial displays above the town of Farnborough with its new passenger jet, the A321XLR, Boeing won’t have any passenger jets doing flypasts for the air show crowds though it will have one of its F-15 fighter jets. That’s in contrast to the last show in 2022, when the American company showcased the latest versions of its 777 and 737 Max airplanes with press tours and flights.

So-called static displays of aircraft parked on the tarmac are also a big draw for air show attendees. Airbus will have three of its passenger jets on the ground, owned by its airline customers, while Boeing will only have one, a 787 from Qatar Airways.

“Normally, they’d be there absolutely in force, taking every opportunity for publicity and flying aircraft,” airline analyst John Strickland of JLS Consulting said.

This time, Boeing has “got to be seen as being more contrite, that they’re focusing on safety, getting their house in order, getting back to winning back trust and respect as a dependable manufacturer of safe, commercially driven aircraft,” Strickland said.

Despite having its wings clipped and reducing production in the wake of the Alaska Airlines incident, Boeing was still able to unveil new deals for widebody jets. Korean Air intends to buy 20 777s and 20 787 Dreamliners while Japan Airlines has agreed to order 10 787s, with each deal including options for 10 more Dreamliners, Boeing said. Rebounding demand for air travel following the coronavirus pandemic means commercial airlines are eager for more planes, and Boeing and Airbus have a duopoly on the market.

Both manufacturers are already swamped with a backlog of orders that will take them years to clear. Boeing’s monthly order numbers, however, have slumped, allowing Airbus to quietly build its sales lead. The Toulouse, France, company has been developing the A321XLR, a fuel-efficient aircraft that’s getting attention from airlines because it will allow them to fly cheaper narrow-body jets on long-haul flights.

The model is behind schedule but expected to get certification later this year and has already racked up more than 500 orders, including from American Airlines and Air Canada.

Also at Farnborough, air taxi startups, including Boeing’s Wisk Aero, will be displaying electric aircraft that could soon take to the skies, although none will be carrying out demonstration flights. A number of companies have been working on aircraft that take off and land vertically, pitching them as a sustainable form of transportation for densely populated cities or areas with less developed mass transit networks.

In a possible sign that air taxis are getting closer to reality, German startup Lilium announced a deal last week to sell aviation conglomerate Saudia Group, which owns Saudi Arabia’s national carrier, 50 aircraft for an undisclosed sum, with the first to be delivered in 2026.

Too many pills? How to talk to your doctor about reviewing what's needed

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Swallowing a handful of pills is a daily ritual for many people, from young adults coping with anxiety to older adults managing chronic conditions. Overall, 13% of people in the U.S. take five or more prescription drugs. For those 65 and older, that number is 42%.

If you're taking multiple meds, it's smart to be aware of potential problems. One pill can lead to a side effect, leading to another pill and another side effect in what experts call a "prescribing cascade."

Some drugs can cause harm if taken for years. Others stop working or interact badly with a new drug. A drug tolerated well at first can cause side effects later, leading to cognitive decline and injuries from falls.

"Our metabolism changes as we get older," said Dr. Elizabeth Bayliss, who studies deprescribing at Kaiser Permanente's Institute for Health Research in Aurora, Colorado. "Everyone's ability to metabolize the medications they've been taking for a long time may change."

The nonprofit Lown Institute calls the whole situation a medication overload that will cause 4.6 million hospital visits this decade.

If your daily pill routine is getting out of hand, ask for a medication review. Here's how to get started with a process called "deprescribing."

Ask for a prescription checkup

Start with a professional you trust, like a doctor or pharmacist, said Lisa McCarthy, a pharmacist and deprescribing expert at the University of Toronto.

If you're asking your doctor, don't wait until the end of a 15-minute visit. Instead, make a dedicated appointment and tell them when booking you want to talk about your medicines, McCarthy said.

Your doctor may not have the full picture of what you're taking if other prescribers are involved, and some doctors hesitate to manage drugs prescribed by others. That's when a pharmacist can help by reviewing everything and writing up suggestions you can share with your doctors, said pharmacist Bradley Phillips of the University of Florida College of Pharmacy.

"We're considered the medication experts," Phillips said.

Could my medicine be causing a problem?

Swelling, incontinence, restlessness, insomnia — all are side effects caused by common medications that sometimes get treated with new drugs. McCarthy wants people to ask their doctors a simple question: Could this symptom be related to one of my medications?

"If we could teach the public to ask that question it would be very powerful," McCarthy said. And for a follow-up question, she suggested: Do I still need this medicine?

Pharmacist Barbara Farrell sees dramatic changes in many people she helps at an outpatient geriatric center in Ottawa, Ontario. Some have emerged from a drug-induced dementia after their meds are reduced. A 77-year-old woman was able to leave her wheelchair and walk with a cane after cutting her daily pills from 32 to 17. She had arrived sedated and unable to communicate, and a few months later, she was back to her hobby of knitting.

Weaning off medication takes time

Some meds can be stopped abruptly but others require a slow taper to prevent uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms — or even life-threatening seizures. Tapering to progressively lower doses is particularly important with drugs for depression, insomnia and anxiety.

After two decades on various pills for these conditions, therapist Molly Bernardi of Spokane, Washington, began tapering down her doses.

The 45-year-old suspected the pills were the cause of her worsening problems with digestion, balance, memory, stiff muscles and flickering dots across her field of vision. When scans ruled out other illnesses, she gradually stopped each of four medications.

"It's been by far the hardest thing I've ever done," Bernardi said.

One of the final drugs she stopped was the toughest: a benzodiazepine, a class of sedatives that can be harmful if taken long term. Over the course of three months, she used a kitchen knife and a nail file

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to cut her 1 milligram daily pill into ever-smaller pieces.

She listened to her body, found support groups on Facebook and used breathwork and prayer to get through withdrawal symptoms.

"Now when I have a good day, a good hour, a good moment, it's peace and presence like I've never known since before I was medicated," Bernardi said. "I'm just experiencing a little bit of great. And a little bit of great is so great that it keeps me going."

Be in charge of your medication list

Even in the best-connected health care systems, McCarthy said, information about prescriptions isn't always shared among doctors. And they won't know about your over-the-counter drugs, vitamins or nightly CBD gummy.

The only person who knows everything you take is you, McCarthy said. So keep a current list of what you take, why it was prescribed and when you started taking it.

For an example of a medication list, which McCarthy called a "tremendously powerful" tool, look at the workshop materials she and her colleagues designed.

Hollywood reacts to Joe Biden exiting the presidential race

By The Associated Press undefined

Hollywood was quick to react to the news that President Joe Biden was ending his bid for reelection and endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris.

Barbra Streisand, a Democratic supporter, wrote Sunday on X that "we should be grateful for his upholding of our democracy." While many paid tribute to Biden's presidency, others wondered about the future.

Cher wrote on X that she thought Biden dropping out was the best chance for Democrats to win. She had written in a post she said was made before she saw Sunday's Biden news that she was "tortured" because she didn't believe the Democrats could win with Biden. She said it was time to think "way outside the box" and proposed a split ticket.

In recent weeks, several high-profile Hollywood names had begun calling for Biden to exit the race. Just weeks after headlining a record-breaking fundraiser for the president's reelection campaign, George Clooney wrote a New York Times opinion piece calling for Biden to end his bid.

Clooney argued that the party should pick a new nominee, saying the process would be "messy" but "wake up" voters in the party's favor.

Others who attended or participated in the starry fundraiser in Los Angeles included Julia Roberts, Streisand, Jimmy Kimmel, former President Barack Obama, Jack Black, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Kathryn Hahn and Jason Bateman.

Ralph, on Sunday, posted a photo of herself and Harris writing "President Biden has endorsed Kamala Harris!"

Here are some notable celebrity reactions:

Barbra Streisand

"Joe Biden will go down in history as a man who accomplished significant achievements in his 4 year term. We should be grateful for his upholding of our democracy." — via a post on X.

Cher

"DEM PARTY MUST 'REALLY,' 'REALLY' THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX. 'WINNING IS ALL', DONT WIN CANT CHANGE ANYTHING & THE TIMES THEY MUST BE A CHANGIN." — via posts on X.

Rob Reiner

"Joe Biden is a man of the highest character. He has tirelessly and effectively served US for over 50 years. He has shown what real leadership is all about. Selfless with a deep respect for our Constitution and the Rule of Law." — via a post on X that ended with a jab at Donald Trump.

Mark Hamill

"@JoeBiden has a record of accomplishments unmatched by any president in our lifetime. He restored honesty, dignity & integrity to the office after 4 years of lies, crime, scandal & chaos. Thank you for your

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service, Mr. President. It's now our duty as patriotic Americans to elect the Democrat who will honor & further your legacy." — via a post on X. The "Star Wars" star visited Biden in the Oval Office in May, jokingly calling him "Joe-bi-Wan-Kenobi."

George Takei

"I want to honor our President @JoeBiden. He has served our nation admirably for decades, he is a decent honorable man, a hugely successful president, and a patriot. Now let us unite behind @KamalaHarris and defeat Donald Trump in November!" — via a post on X.

Russell Brand

"Joe Biden has endorsed Kamala Harris for the Democratic nomination after ending re-election bid. We're in a wild world, mate." — via a post on X. Brand recently said voters should pick Trump over Biden.

Venezuelan opposition voters band to safeguard election, warning of the ruling party's tricks

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

SABANETA, Venezuela (AP) — Tears roll down the face of Tanyia Colmenares when she recalls her truncated dream of being a lawyer, which ended after two semesters in law school when she had to drop out to survive Venezuela's complex crisis.

While she never got to defend a client in court, she has agreed to try to defend something far greater at the end of this month: Venezuela's democracy.

Colmenares is among the thousands of supporters of Venezuela's typically fractured opposition who have agreed to organize, mobilize and support voters during the highly anticipated July 28 presidential election.

The main opposition coalition is banking on their efforts, some led by parties and others formed organically, to get people to the polls to cast ballots as well as to deter government actors from intimidating or coercing voters.

The lack of a truly independent electoral authority makes such work critical for the alliance's ability to verify or contest the outcome. The Unitary Platform coalition hopes the mere presence of large numbers of watchful voters outside polling places will neutralize some ruling party strategies that in the past left them without representatives inside the facilities, kept them away from vote counts and rendered them voiceless in the event of irregularities.

The western Venezuela city of Sabaneta is the cradle of Chavismo — the self-described socialist movement founded by the late President Hugo Chávez that has dominated Venezuela since the turn of the century. It is also where Colmenares is banding with nine other neighbors to promote the vote and ensure opposition supporters reach their polling place. They are ready to find voters rides, provide support should they encounter ruling-party checkpoints or hand out water or food if long lines form.

"Whether through social media, calls, text messages (or) personally, whatever way is easier for people, the important thing is to engage with the community and get the job done," Colmenares, a stay-at-home mother of three, said after a neighborhood group meeting earlier this month.

This month's election is unlike any the ruling party has faced since Chávez was elected president in December 1998 and began transitioning Venezuela into what he described as the 21st century's socialism.

Now led by Chávez's heir, President Nicolás Maduro, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela is as unpopular as ever among many voters. Weak oil prices, corruption and economic mismanagement by the government plunged the country into a crisis that has lasted more than 11 years. Young people have had to give up college dreams, children have gone hungry and millions have emigrated.

Economic sanctions imposed last decade failed to topple Maduro, as the United States and other governments hoped, but they contributed to Venezuela's decline.

Opposition politicians for years boycotted elections they saw as rigged, but they overcame deep divisions to coalesce behind a single candidate this time. They also kept that spot on the ballot despite sustained government repression, including the ban from the race of María Corina Machado, the strongest challenger to Maduro's bid for a third term in office.

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Machado, who overwhelmingly won the coalition's October primary, is now backing the coalition's replacement candidate, former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia.

Pollsters project up to 13 million people will cast ballots July 28.

The opposition estimates that more than a half million people have registered for its somewhat loose structure of neighborhood groups nicknamed "comanditos" — or tiny commandos.

Group members, by now all familiar with the ruling party's efforts to tilt the balance on election days, expect gas stations to not open, power outages to affect opposition strongholds, police and Maduro loyalists to block roads, and the military to limit access to polling centers.

Some groups are holding raffles and selling traditional tamale-like hallacas to raise funds to print promotional materials for their neighborhoods and cook meals for opposition supporters. Others are storing gasoline at home and offering their cars or motorcycles to transport voters.

All have been instructed by the coalition to remain outside polling centers after voting to fight fear among voters and their voting center representatives, whose duties include securing a copy of tally certificates printed by electronic voting machines after polls close. Ruling party loyalists, including armed gangs, are known to have intimidated voting center representatives, known as witnesses, into staying home or abandoning their duties halfway through an election day.

Electoral rules allow parties to have one witness for every voting station set up at polling places.

"We have agreed as a comandito that after we vote, we are going to monitor and be a guarantor of the votes on July 28," local organizer Fidel Ortega said during a group meeting. "God willing, we are going to defend our right to vote as Venezuelans. On the 28th, we vote; on the 29th, we celebrate; and from then on, we all win."

Ortega estimated opposition supporters have formed at least 40 neighborhood groups in the municipality that includes Sabaneta, which sits in a vast tropical grassland plain.

The government-controlled National Electoral Council chose to set up about 36,000 voting machines. Many polling places are spread thin, making it harder for the opposition to monitor them. About a third of registered voters in this election are assigned to polling places with only one or two voting machines.

The ruling party has traditionally obtained the bulk of its vote in these smaller polling places, and for this election, the electoral council added 1,700 single-machine centers. Reports of ruling party efforts to coerce and control voting during previous elections have mostly been associated with these one- and two-machine vote centers.

Although thousands have registered in their neighborhood groups, fear of retribution should the data be leaked has kept some opposition supporters from formally joining the mobilizing effort. But they are still managing groups of friends, family and coworkers with whom they plan to coordinate on July 28.

"We must accompany people so that they lose their fear," said high school teacher Edgar Cuevas, who will work the polls on election day. "Before they did overshadow us with their armed gangs and their stuff, but now, if 10 gang members arrive, well, they will find 20 of us."

Harris gets a chance to press reset on the 2024 race against Trump

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the past year, the presidential campaign seemed destined to be a monotonous slog featuring two candidates, President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, who voters didn't really want.

But that all changed on a quiet Sunday afternoon just 107 days before the election.

Biden's decision to drop out of the race and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris as his successor resets the campaign with a swiftness that is unparalleled in modern American politics.

Once a contest between two older white men, the election will likely force Trump to contend with the much younger Harris, who was consolidating support among Democrats and would be the first woman of color atop a major party's ticket.

"It shakes things up entirely," said Dan Pfeiffer, a former adviser to President Barack Obama. "It turns

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everything on its head.”

The crumbling of Biden’s Democratic reelection effort, which began with his shaky debate performance against the Republican former president last month, has left both parties scrambling. Although no one has stepped forward to challenge Harris for the Democratic nomination, she still faces the unprecedented challenge of taking over a campaign only four weeks before the party gathers in Chicago for its convention.

At the same time, Trump must pivot his focus to Harris after designing his campaign for a rematch with Biden. Trump’s team claimed it was prepared to run against the vice president, and Republicans stepped up their criticism during the party’s convention last week in Milwaukee.

However, Trump himself expressed disappointment that “we have to start all over again” with the campaign. He mused on Truth Social, his social media platform, that Republicans should be “reimbursed for fraud” for all the money they’ve spent running against Biden.

The shakeup in the presidential race came after an extraordinarily tumultuous month in American politics, starting with an unusually early debate between Biden and Trump.

The June 27 showdown catalyzed concerns that Biden, 81, was too old for a second term.

As Democrats pushed to dislodge him from the top of the ticket, Trump survived an assassination attempt on July 13 during a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.

Just a week later, Biden bowed to pressure within his party to step aside. He swiftly endorsed Harris, who is the first woman, Black person and person of South Asian descent to serve as vice president.

The breakneck developments left the political world gasping for breath as everyone tried to reorient themselves to a new reality.

Trump, who is 78, will almost certainly be the oldest candidate on the ballot after spending months battering Biden over his age. Harris is only 59, giving her a claim to representing generational change that Biden could never fulfill.

In addition, Harris is a former prosecutor, providing a fresh opportunity to assail Trump’s status as a convicted felon after being found guilty in a hush money trial earlier this year.

She is also the daughter of immigrants, raised by a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, a background that heightens the contrast with Trump, who has used racist, sexist and nativist rhetoric.

Harris tried to summarize their differences in a campaign advertisement five years ago, when she was seeking the Democratic nomination before dropping out and joining Biden’s campaign as his running mate.

“In every possible way, this is the anti-Trump,” the narrator said. “So if that’s what you’re looking for in your next president, there’s really only one — Kamala.”

The leaders of Trump’s campaign dismissed the dramatic change, saying, “Kamala Harris is just as much of (a) joke as Biden is.”

“They own each other’s records, and there is no distance between the two,” said a statement from senior advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles.

Immigration will remain a key line of attack against Democrats, especially because Harris was tasked by Biden to work on migration issues early in the administration. Republicans claimed she was appointed as a “border czar” and blamed her for unauthorized crossings.

“They’re still going to run the Gotham City playbook with an added dose of racism and sexism,” said Cornell Belcher, a Democratic pollster. “And let’s not pretend that those things don’t matter, because they do.”

However, Belcher said, Harris’ “X factor” is her potential appeal to a diversifying electorate.

“When you look at her, she is the Democrats’ best chance right now to re-engage and energize that coalition of younger, browner voters,” he said.

Democrats were eager to turn a political weakness that hounded Biden — his age — into an attack on Trump.

“This will probably boil down to Donald Trump, who is the oldest nominee in history, against Kamala Harris,” said Rep. Maxwell Frost, a 27-year-old Democrat from Florida who has worked to reach young voters for Biden’s campaign.

Frost, who endorsed Harris, pointed to the vice president’s work on gun violence protection as an issue

that could engage young voters and said she "will be able to win back a lot of the youth vote."

"She is someone who really values young voices in general," he said.

At last week's Republican National Convention, Trump pollster and senior advisor Tony Fabrizio said the campaign was "100% ready" to take on Harris. He noted speakers at the event often referred to the "Biden-Harris" administration in their speeches and said the campaign had prepared anti-Harris videos to swap in just in case Biden stepped down sooner.

However, Trump seemed to have some doubts. After Biden dropped out of the race, Trump suggested he was having second thoughts about participating in another debate hosted by ABC News on Sept. 10.

"Now that Joe has, not surprisingly, has quit the race, I think the Debate, with whomever the Radical Left Democrats choose, should be held on FoxNews, rather than very biased ABC," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Biden's decision to drop out leaves Democrats across the country relieved and looking toward future

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI, MIKE HOUSEHOLDER and CHARLOTTE KRAMON Associated Press

HARPER WOODS, Mich. (AP) — After weeks of uncertainty about who would be at the top of the Democratic Party's ticket in November, many voters expressed relief over the news that President Joe Biden would drop his reelection bid and began to think about who might replace him in a dramatically altered election landscape.

Jerod Keene, a 40-year-old athletic trainer from swing-state Arizona, had planned to vote for Biden in November but was thankful for the president's decision, calling it "inevitable." Keene said he's excited about the next candidate, hoping it will be Vice President Kamala Harris, whom Biden endorsed on Sunday.

"Kamala Harris is the easiest pick based on the fact that she's vice president and it would be tough for the party to try to go a different direction on that," said Keene, who lives in Tucson. "And I think she seems ready."

The Democratic Party has been deeply divided since Biden's poor debate performance on June 27, which left many questioning his ability to defeat Republican Donald Trump in November and secure another term. Party leaders had increasingly called for Biden to step aside, but his reluctance to bow out left voters nationwide uncertain about who would face Trump in November.

Recent AP-NORC polling revealed that nearly two-thirds of Democrats felt Biden should withdraw from the presidential race, while a majority believe Harris would perform well in the top slot.

Keene's relief that the saga surrounding Biden's decision was over was echoed by voters nationwide in interviews with The Associated Press. In key swing states such as Wisconsin, Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Nevada, many expressed optimism about the party's next nominee — whether it be Harris or someone else.

In Pittsburgh, Fred Johnston said he has been terrified of another Trump presidency and had long worried that Biden couldn't beat Trump again. After seeing Biden's wobbly debate performance, he was eager for Biden to drop out and hand off his candidacy to Harris.

"Kamala is someone we can vote for, and that's what we need," Johnston said.

He also thinks she can win Pennsylvania: "I have no logical basis for this, but it's good to have hope. I haven't had hope for a while."

In Las Vegas, Lucy Ouano, 68, said she was proud of both Biden's decision to drop out of the race and his move to quickly endorse Harris.

"He's ending on a great note," Ouano said. "Trump should be worried. He's now running against someone strong."

Ouano, who emigrated in 1960 to the U.S. from Thailand as a young child with her parents, said she couldn't have imagined this outcome just a few weeks ago when she attended a Harris rally in Las Vegas meant to quiet concerns about Biden's reelection campaign.

At the time, she told the AP that while she planned on voting for Biden, she wanted Harris at the top

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of the ticket.

"She's going to get the Asians drummed up, and she's going to get the women drummed up," Oaano said Sunday after learning about Biden's decision.

Similarly, Arthur L. Downard Jr., a 72-year-old resident of Portland, Oregon, viewed Biden's presidency favorably but said he was "very pleased" that Biden stepped aside. The Democratic voter, who cast his ballot for Biden in 2020, said his opinion of Biden changed after what he called a "disastrous" debate.

"He's been a great president and he's gotten a lot done for our country. But he's too old, he's not articulate," he said. "He's not a good messenger for the Democratic Party."

Some voters, like Nebraska resident Lacey LeGrand, had planned to reluctantly vote for Biden simply because he wasn't Trump.

"I'm definitely not supporting Trump," LeGrand said. "So I think by default I was going to end up supporting Biden. I wasn't very happy about it."

LeGrand, a registered Democrat in Nebraska's Omaha swing district, a potentially decisive electoral vote that Biden and Obama both won previously, believes Harris "has a shot" at defeating Trump, though she added, "I wouldn't say it's a great shot."

But not all voters were happy about Sunday's news. Georgia voter Dorothy Redhead, 76, was "disappointed" that Biden dropped out of the race but said she is "just having to accept" Biden's decision as one between the president and God.

Jarvia Haynes, a real estate agent in New Orleans, said she has "mixed feelings" about Biden's decision to leave the race.

"I don't think President Biden should have dropped out," she said. "On the other hand, maybe it's for the best."

Haynes, 72, of Harvey, Louisiana, a suburb of New Orleans, quickly focused on who should lead the Democratic ticket, saying she is "very positive about Vice President Kamala Harris being able to handle the job."

She added that she hopes Harris would choose Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to be her running mate.

"I think two women would change the whole dynamic of the race," said Haynes, who joins Harris as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the first intercollegiate historically African American sorority. The group boasts more than 360,000 members in graduate and undergraduate chapters in 12 countries and could be a formidable political force of its own.

Barbara Orr, a psychotherapist in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania area, said she thought Biden was capable of running for president, beating Trump and serving as president. She viewed his decision to end his candidacy, however, as a sign that he is not guided by ego and recognized that, because of his debate performance, voters assume that he can't do the job.

Orr, 65, said she isn't "super impressed" with Harris, "but she might rise to the occasion. That's happened before in history."

She also acknowledged that Harris hasn't had the chance to prove her mettle as a candidate against Trump.

Orr, a self-described progressive who favored Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders or Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren for president in 2020, said she would probably prefer Whitmer to replace Biden on the Democratic ticket.

"I love what she stands for," Orr said.

Joe DeFrain was out kayaking when a text informed him that Biden had dropped out. While the Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan, resident said he wasn't stunned to learn of the development, one thing did surprise him.

"I was waiting to see if all the boaters out there were going to be screaming with joy, because a lot of them are Trump fans. And I didn't hear anything," DeFrain said after sitting down for dinner at They Say, a restaurant in the Detroit suburb of Harper Woods.

Biden visited They Say earlier this year, a moment that manager George Ledbetter said was "the best

ever.”

Ledbetters’ first reaction to the news came down to a single word: “Why?”

“He’s a good president. I like Biden,” Ledbetter said. But, he added, “You gotta do what you gotta do.”

Ledbetter said he’ll support Harris despite his disappointment.

“I’ll take that, too. I think she can do it. First woman president. That’d be nice. African American president. It’d be nice again,” said Ledbetter, who is Black.

As for DeFrain, he said he’ll be watching to see what happens before and during the Democratic National Convention.

“It’s going to be something we have never seen in our lifetime,” said DeFrain, who has voted for Democrats in recent elections. “It should be entertaining.”

LeBron James selected as Team USA male flagbearer for Paris Olympics opening ceremony

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

LeBron James wasn’t totally sure what the opening ceremony was all about when he was picked for his first Olympics in 2004.

This time, he’ll be one of the stars of the show.

James has been picked by his fellow U.S. Olympians to serve as the male flagbearer for the Americans in Friday night’s opening ceremony for the Paris Games. He becomes the third basketball player — and the first men’s player — to carry the U.S. flag at the start of an Olympics, joining Dawn Staley for the Athens Games in 2004 and Sue Bird for the Tokyo Games that happened in 2021.

“It’s an incredible honor to represent the United States on this global stage, especially in a moment that can bring the whole world together,” James said. “For a kid from Akron, this responsibility means everything to not only myself, but to my family, all the kids in my hometown, my teammates, fellow Olympians and so many people across the country with big aspirations. Sports have the power to bring us all together, and I’m proud to be a part of this important moment.”

The 39-year-old James got word of the honor Monday in London, a few hours before the U.S. men’s team was scheduled to play its final pre-Olympics exhibition game against World Cup champion Germany.

Fellow U.S. star and first-time Olympian Stephen Curry, on behalf of the U.S. men’s team, nominated James for the flagbearer role.

“We understand how much of an honor it is to be in that position and I think Bron’s entire career, on and off the court, speaks for itself as him being worthy of that honor,” Curry said in the nomination video.

“He has represented what it means to be excellent both on and off the court in his commitment to service and to uplifting the community in all ways that he knows how has been a lifelong passion,” Curry added. “And the work speaks for itself.”

The female U.S. flagbearer is expected to be revealed Tuesday. The International Olympic Committee decided in 2020 that national delegations would have two flagbearers — one male, one female — at the opening ceremony at an Olympics, a move to promote gender parity. The U.S. is expected to have nearly 600 athletes in the Paris Games, about 53% of them female.

“Being selected by your teammates to carry the flag is a tremendous honor — and a testament to LeBron’s passion for Team USA and his dedication to his sport,” U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee CEO Sarah Hirshland said.

James — a global icon, a four-time NBA champion and the league’s all-time leading scorer set to go into his record-tying 22nd NBA season — is set to play in the Olympics for the fourth time, after he was part of U.S. teams that won bronze in 2004, gold at Beijing in 2008 and gold again in London in 2012. He walked in the opening ceremony at each of his three previous Olympics.

This time, he’ll float.

This will be an opening ceremony like none other in Olympic history: Thousands of athletes will be part

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of a flotilla sailing along the River Seine at sunset toward the Eiffel Tower. It's a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) route, with about 320,000 guests set to watch from the river bank and about 1 billion more, Olympic officials estimate, watching on televisions around the world.

Not all Olympic athletes take part in the opening ceremony; many skip it for logistical reasons, such as having to compete the following day. James and the four-time defending gold medalist U.S. men don't open Olympic play until Sunday, when they face Serbia at Lille, France.

James and the U.S. Olympians will be waiting longer than almost any other nation for their trip on the Seine. By IOC custom, Greece — which will have NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo as one of its two flagbearers — will lead the procession, followed by the Refugee Olympic Team and then about 200 more national delegations. The U.S. is scheduled to go next-to-last in the procession, because Los Angeles will play host to the next Summer Games in 2028.

France, as the host, will be the final nation in the opening ceremony procession. Its men's basketball team, featuring reigning NBA rookie of the year Victor Wembanyama, opens Olympic play on Saturday and isn't expected to be present for the opening ceremony.

Today in History: July 23, the 1967 Detroit riot begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, July 23, the 205th day of 2024. There are 161 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 23, 1967, the first of five days of deadly rioting erupted in Detroit as an early morning police raid on an unlicensed bar resulted in a confrontation with local residents, escalating into violence that spread into other parts of the city and resulting in 43 deaths.

Also on this date:

In 1903, the Ford Motor Company sold its first car, a Model A, for \$850.

In 1958, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II named the first four women to peerage in the House of Lords.

In 1982, actor Vic Morrow and two child actors, 7-year-old Myca Dinh Le and 6-year-old Renee Shin-Yi Chen, were killed when a helicopter crashed on top of them during filming of a Vietnam War scene for "Twilight Zone: The Movie." (Director John Landis and four associates were later acquitted of manslaughter charges.)

In 1983, an Air Canada Boeing 767 ran out of fuel while flying from Montreal to Edmonton; the pilots were able to glide the jetliner to a safe emergency landing in Gimli, Manitoba. (The near-disaster occurred because the fuel had been erroneously measured in pounds instead of kilograms at a time when Canada was converting to the metric system.)

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush announced his choice of Judge David Souter of New Hampshire to succeed the retiring Justice William J. Brennan on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1996, at the Atlanta Olympics, Kerri Strug made a heroic final vault despite torn ligaments in her left ankle as the U.S. women gymnasts clinched their first-ever Olympic team gold medal.

In 1997, the search for Andrew Cunanan, the suspected killer of designer Gianni Versace and others, ended as police found his body on a houseboat in Miami Beach, an apparent suicide.

In 1999, the space shuttle Columbia blasted off with the world's most powerful X-ray telescope and Eileen Collins became the first woman to command a U.S. space flight.

In 2003, Massachusetts' attorney general issued a report saying clergy members and others in the Boston Archdiocese had probably sexually abused more than 1,000 people over a period of six decades.

In 2006, Tiger Woods became the first player since Tom Watson in 1982-83 to win consecutive British Open titles.

In 2011, singer Amy Winehouse, 27, was found dead in her London home from accidental alcohol poisoning.

In 2012, Penn State's football program was all but leveled by penalties for its handling of the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal as the NCAA imposed an unprecedented \$60 million fine, a four-year ban

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from postseason play and a cut in the number of football scholarships it could award.

In 2019, Boris Johnson won the contest to lead Britain's governing Conservative Party, putting him in line to become the country's prime minister the following day.

In 2021, Cleveland's Major League Baseball team, known as the Indians since 1915, announced that it would get a new name, the Guardians, at the end of the 2021 season; the change came amid a push for institutions and teams to drop logos and names that were considered racist.

Today's Birthdays: Retired Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy is 88. Actor Ronny Cox is 86. Rock singer David Essex is 77. Actor Woody Harrelson is 63. Rock musician Martin Gore (Depeche Mode) is 63. Actor & director Eriq La Salle is 62. Rock musician Slash is 59. Basketball Hall of Famer Gary Payton is 56. Model-actor Stephanie Seymour is 56. Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Ga., is 55. Actor Charisma Carpenter is 54. Country singer Alison Krauss is 53. R&B singer Dalvin DeGrate (Jodeci) is 53. Actor-comedian Marlon Wayans is 52. Actor Kathryn Hahn is 51. Former White House intern Monica Lewinsky is 51. Actor Stephanie March is 50. R&B singer Michelle Williams is 45. Actor Paul Wesley is 42. Actor Daniel Radcliffe is 35.